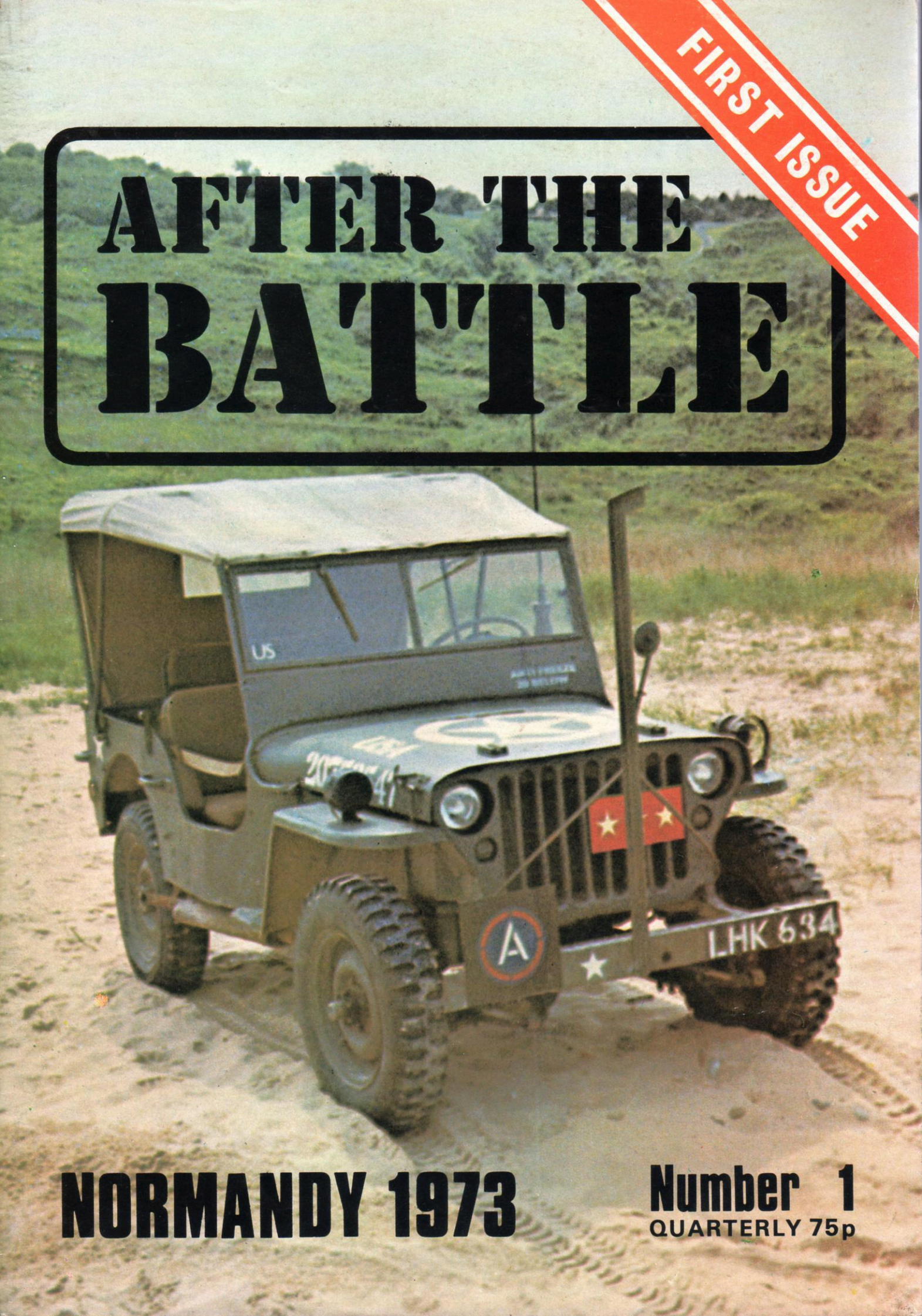
FIRST ISSUE

AFTER THE BATTLE



NORMANDY 1973

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AFTER THE BATTLE

NUMBER 1

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Cover Picture: A 1943 vintage Willys Jeep restored as General Patton's vehicle when in the 3rd US Army in 1944. Complete with siren and anti-decapitation wire cutter, the jeep is seen on Omaha beach near the American Cemetery, June 1973.

Right: Queen White beach in Sword area photographed in 1973.

Far right: The same beach on June 6, 1944. Corporal David Dutton (right foreground with anchor shoulder flash) with the 84th Field Company, Royal Engineers which landed at H + 30 (IWM).

Centre pages: Churchill tanks training in Southern Command area in 1942 (IWM).

Back cover: CASA 2. 111-D's of the Spanish Air Force – Merlin-engined Heinkels (Spitfire Productions).

The editor is indebted to the authors and publishers of the following books to quote extracts:

Dawn of D-Day by David Howath, Collins. (Troarn Bridge, Pegasus Bridge, Utah Beach).

The Longest Day by Cornelius Ryan, Victor Gollancz. (Pointe du Hoe, St. Mere Eglise).

The Red Beret by Hilary St. George Saunders, Curtis Brown Ltd. (Merville Battery).

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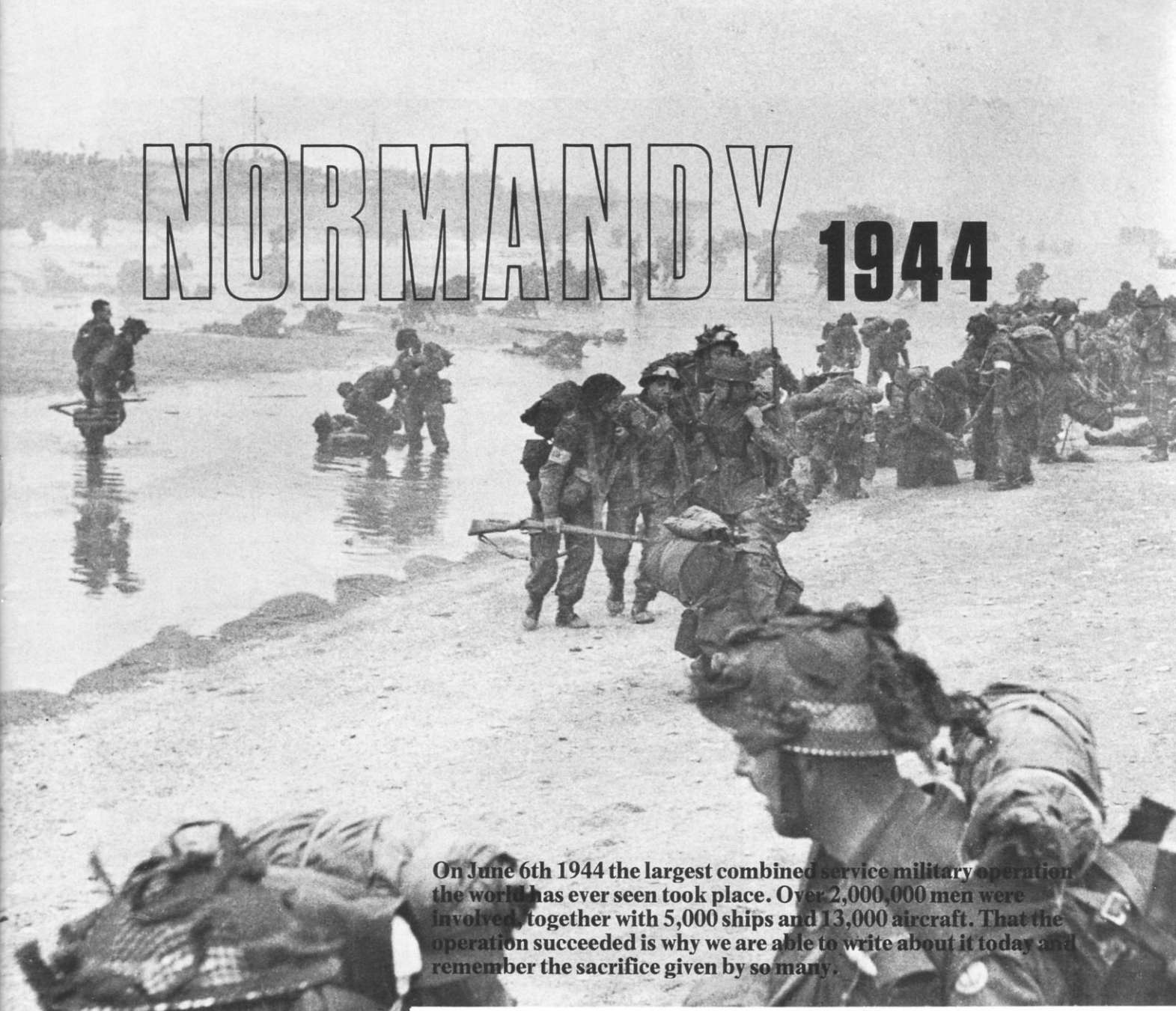
1973

NORMANDY 1944



On June 6th 1944 the largest combined service military operation the world has ever seen took place. Over 2,000,000 men were involved, together with 5,000 ships and 13,000 aircraft. That the operation succeeded is why we are able to write about it today and remember the sacrifice given by so many.

For a visitor to Normandy in 1973, the countryside will be one of contrasts. In some areas little trace of the devastation of 1944 remains and extensive re-building has altered the face of some coastal and inland towns.

On the sea-front, the British and Canadian beaches, Sword, Juno and Gold, have undergone the most redevelopment and many holiday chalets and villas have been built together with a sea wall on Queen Beach, the main assault beach of the 3rd British Division.

The American beaches, Omaha and Utah on the other hand, remain largely as they were. Many sights remain to be seen virtually the same as in 1944 as our photographs show.

We have tried to cover a cross-section of the landings both airborne and land, British and American and the Royal Air Force side with the construction of an advanced landing ground.

As near as possible we follow the action from the Orne river to the Cherbourg peninsular — the British to the American Sector.

A word should be included at this point on the German defences. In 1944 it was believed that the coast was defended by the 716th Infantry Division whose strength was estimated to be 13,000 men, with 20 anti-tank guns, 60 other guns and a small force of tanks. Its efficiency compared with a first class line division was assessed at 40% in a static role and 15% in a counter-attack role. The 21st Panzer Division, 352nd Infantry Division, 12th SS Division (Hitler Jugend) were also believed to be in the vicinity.

All the coast towns and villages had been turned into strongpoints, artillery was in concrete emplacements, roads had been blocked, anti-tank ditches had been dug, barbed wire and mines laid.

The beaches were obstructed by several kinds of obstacles:—Timber ramps and stakes, (the remains of the latter can still be seen at low tide on some beaches), steel hedgehogs, steel tetrahedra, rafts and concrete box charges. These obstacles were fitted with Teller mines and waterproofed shells to explode on impact.

Additionally large areas of the countryside were flooded on the Eastern and Western flanks of the Allied assault area.

Above: The actual preserved map on which the 'Overlord' Supreme Commander General Dwight D. Eisenhower and his colleagues deliberated on the postponement of D-Day from Monday 5th to Tuesday, 6th June 1944.
Right: Southwick House, now *HMS Dryad* at Portsmouth, which was the Supreme headquarters of the 'Overlord' operation, photographed 1973. (G. Sergeant, Nautic).

NORMANDY 1973

The airborne landings

6th AIRBORNE DIVISION

The immediate task of the 6th Airborne Division was to clear and mark the landing strips for the following gliders. In the event 60 per cent of the gliders landing at night did so in the correct places.

Thereafter the Division's primary tasks were to:—

(a) Capture the bridges over the Orne river and Caen canal. (b) Capture the Merville Battery. (c) Destroy the bridges over the River Dives at Troan, Bures, Robehomme and Varaville.

All these tasks were carried out in spite of the wide scattering of the troops on arrival.

THE ORNE BRIDGES

The attack on Pegasus Bridge—as recalled by Major John Howard in the book "Dawn of D Day".

The flight across the Channel was scheduled to take one hour and twenty-four minutes. On the other side of Howard, at the controls of the glider, was his pilot, Staff-Sergeant Wallwork of the Glider Pilot Regiment.

At 12.16 Wallwork half turned in the pilot's seat and shouted back to him: "Casting off." Howard called for silence, and the singing and talking died as the order was passed down the two lines of men who sat facing each other on each side of the body of the glider. The glider checked: the tow rope was gone: as the speed fell off, the roar of the wind on the flimsy structure also died, to a hiss which seemed like silence; and in the silence fears rose up which the cheerful noise had held in check till then. The nose dropped, and the glider swooped, bumping through the torn clouds. Brotheridge undid his safety belt and stood up, with Howard and the platoon sergeant holding him, and swung open the forward door. Cold air streamed in. The glider levelled out from the dive and banked steeply to the right, and peering down through the open door into the darkness of space beneath, Howard glimpsed for a second a dimly gleaming ribbon: the Caen Canal.

"Hold tight," Wallwork said; and all the platoon linked arms and lifted their feet off

Above left: Gordon Highlanders approaching the Canal bridge on 9th June 1944 opposite M. Gondree's restaurant, now renamed 'Pegasus Cafe'. (IWM).

Above: The Shell sign has gone, but the bracket remains; the drainpipe has been repaired, June 1973.

the floor and sat there locked together, waiting.

The concussion was shattering. The glider tore into the earth at ninety miles an hour, and careered across the tiny field with a noise like thunder as timber cracked and split and it smashed itself to pieces. The stunning noise and shocks went on and on for a count of seconds; and then suddenly for a split second everything was perfectly still and silent. But even in the stunned silence, training worked. Howard found he had undone his belt and was on his feet. The doorway had crumpled into wreckage. But in front of him was a jagged hole in the glider's side and he went through it head-first and fell on the earth of France, picked himself up and felt his limbs for broken bones and looked up: and there against the night sky, exactly and precisely where it should have been, twenty paces away, was the steel lattice tower of the canal bridge. Lieutenant Brotheridge, the platoon commander, came running round the tail: he had got out of a hole on the other side. "All right?" he said. "Yes," Howard said. "Carry on." Brotheridge shouted his platoon letter, "Able, Able," to rally the men who were tumbling out of the wreckage, and the action began which they had all rehearsed on bridges all over England. A phosphorus smoke bomb was thrown at the pillbox by the bridge. A machine gun opened fire from it, but one man ran forward under cover of the smoke and dropped a Mills bomb through the gun port, and the platoon scrambled across the wire which the glider had demolished, up an embankment on to the road, and with yells of "Able, Able," they dashed across the bridge against the fire of a second machine gun on the far side. Howard made for the spot he had named as his command post, followed by his radio operator, Corporal Tappenden, and as he ran he heard a crash behind him, and then another: the other two gliders coming in. Soon above the noise of small arms fire he heard his second and third platoons come running through the darkness, shouting "Baker" and "Charlie," not only to identify themselves, but also because men shout by instinct when they charge into a battle.

The sentry on the bridge was a young German called Helmut Romer, and when he saw the first glider crash he naturally thought it was a bomber, because there were heavy air-raids going on in Caen and along the coast, and he had been watching the anti-aircraft fire. Nobody had told him anything more than an air-raid was expected. So when men with black faces charged across the bridge at him, he was totally taken by surprise. He dived for the trenches: it was the only thing he could do. There was no time for the guard to turn out, much less for the whole platoon to be called from their billets. But the N.C.O. of the guard fired the machine gun and shot down the first of the men who were coming across the bridge. Then the wave of them broke into the trenches, and the garrison scattered and ran.

Within three minutes of the crash, the

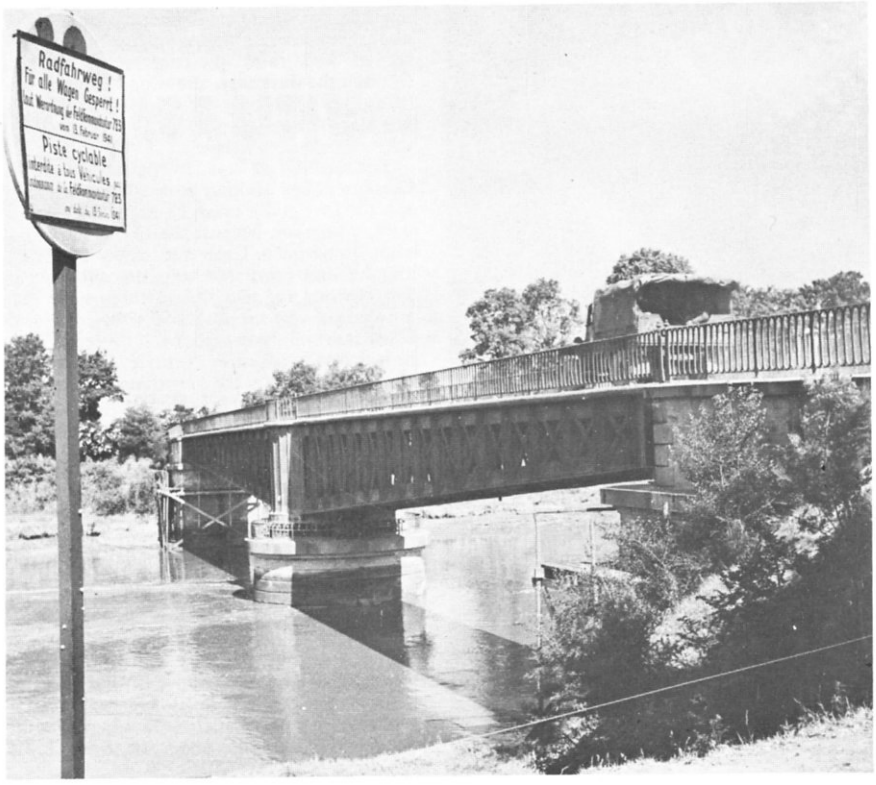
Left: The glider landing strips between Ranville and Amfreville photographed on 22nd June 1944. Ranville is on the extreme right of the photograph. Just to the east was the Chateau de Ranville which the 5th Parachute Brigade used as their initial headquarters. (IWM).

Left: Gliders of the coup-de-main party that crashed by the Canal bridge photographed on 8th June 1944. The superstructure of the bridge is behind the trees; M. Gondree's cafe, used for the wounded, through the trees on the far bank. (IWM).

Above: June 1973—the trees have gone and anglers fish where the gliders landed.

Left: A close-up of transport crossing the Canal bridge, codenamed EUSTON I, on the 9th June 1944. Note the gliders on the far bank. (IWM).

Above: *After the Battle's* jeep outside the Pegasus Cafe, June 1973.



Left: River Orne bridge. A German sign has replaced a French one on a track at the side of the river. The river and canal are only a few hundred yards apart at this point. (IWM).

Above: June 1973—The original bridge, which the Army called EUSTON II, has been replaced by a four-lane modern structure.

attack had succeeded. Engineers searched for the demolition wiring and disconnected it. The charge itself had not been put in place: they found it afterwards in a store by the bridgehead. With the bridge in their hands, the infantry went on to clear out the houses beyond it. One man from the leading platoon came back across the bridge to tell Howard they were through. By Howard's side, Corporal Tappenden was trying to call the other half of the company which by then should have landed at the Orne Bridge down the road, but he could not get an answer. Then

Tappenden looked up from his radio and shouted: "I've raised them, sir. They got the other bridge."

The attack on the Orne Bridge had been a walk-over. The landing had not been so precise as the landing at the canal. One glider was close to the bridge, but the next was a quarter of a mile away. The third was cast off from its tug in the wrong place, and landed beyond the marshes of the Dives. Even the first of the three was a minute or two behind the first at the canal, and the leading platoon, commanded by Lt. Fox, got to the bridge just in time to see the German defenders running for their lives. One of Fox's N.C.O.s jumped into an empty machine-gun post and turned the German gun against the retreating Germans; and his were the only shots which were fired.

The attack on Pegasus Bridge is probably one of the most well-known of the D-Day operations. The bridge remains today exactly as it was when the gliders landed at 12.20 on D-Day morning. Three of the gliders landed on the bank beside the anti-tank gun still in its concrete pit. They were still there in late 1946. The river bank has changed slightly and some trees removed, but the cafe owned by M. Gondree, where the casualties were taken, still remains, proudly displaying a certificate from the War Office recording that they were probably the first French citizens liberated by the British Army.

The Orne river bridge, a few hundred yards down the road, was replaced by a new bridge two years ago. The tracks at the side of the river and canal used by the troops to reach the other Bailey bridges, which were subsequently constructed, are still visible and one has been made into a major road to Ouistreham. Eight additional Bailey bridges were constructed—TAY 1 and 2, LONDON 1 and 2, YORK 1 and 2, and TOWER 1 and 2, over the canal and the river Orne between Caen and Ouistreham. Nothing is left of them but the approaches to some are still visible in the undergrowth.

Troarn bridge

To protect the left flank of the bridgehead, five bridges over the River Dives were to be blown by detachments of the 3rd Parachute Brigade together with sappers.

The most important of the bridges, and the farthest away, was the one where the main road from Caen to Rouen and Le Havre crosses the river, just beyond the small town of Troarn. It was planned that a troop of engineers under Major J. C. A. Roseveare, protected by infantry, should dash for this bridge while the Germans were still confused. They were to carry their explosives in jeeps with trailers, which were to land in gliders. But this plan went astray.

The troops dropped on time, at 1.50; but when Roseveare came to earth he could not see any landmarks which he knew. It seemed to him, as he stood in the dark in a field which he could not recognise, that aircraft were coming in from every direction and dropping parachutists from every unit in the division. Some gliders were landing nearby, but not the gliders which were carrying his jeeps. A mile away to the south-west there were sounds of fighting, and he guessed rightly that the last men out of each of his aircraft were already involved with the Germans.

However, he rallied what men he could, and they collected all the equipment they could find. At length, he had six officers and about forty other ranks; but of the protecting infantry there were only twenty men and no officers at all. Between them, they gathered up plenty of explosive, but there was nothing to carry it in except trolleys which had to be hauled by hand.

This rather forlorn and yet determined party set off about half past two, under mortar and machine-gun fire, to haul the trolleys up a steep hill in one of the winding Norman lanes. Many of them were already limping from injuries of the drop. Before long, they came to a cross-roads with a signpost which confirmed what some had already come to suspect: they had dropped two miles too far north, and the Troarn Bridge was seven miles away.

There was very little hope of hauling the trolleys so far before dawn, and no hope at all, of course, of hauling them through the town in daylight.

In this unpromising situation, a motor was heard approaching, and a jeep with a trailer appeared from the darkness. It was not an R.E. jeep, it belonged to the R.A.M.C., and it was full of medical stores; but if the R.A.M.C. men had wanted to argue, they would probably not have had much chance. They surrendered their jeep, and the engineers turned out the medical stores in a timber yard, and loaded it with explosives. *(Photo 1)* By then, it was four o'clock: just over an hour to dawn, and five miles still to Troarn. There was no time to think about anyone on foot. Roseveare dispatched the greater part of his force, commanded by Captain Juckes, across country to the bridges at Bures. He himself took the wheel of the jeep, and piled on the jeep and trailer one officer and seven other men. Including them, the load was a ton and a quarter. They drove off alone down the lane, into country where no British troops had landed.

Their first encounter was at a level crossing. The gates were open, but there was a barbed-wire barrier across the road, and Roseveare drove into it before he saw it. *(Photo 2)* A German sentry fired a single shot and ran away. The jeep was so tangled in wire that it took twenty minutes' work to cut it free: a tense twenty minutes, for it had to be assumed that the sentry had gone to call a guard. Clear of that obstacle, they reached the main road on the edge of the town, and Roseveare sent two scouts ahead. As the scouts reached the cross-road, a German soldier rode past it on a

Left: LONDON II, which was a Class 40 Bailey pontoon bridge, 300 yards to the south of the Orne bridge in 1944. (IWM). It took 50 hours to build.

Below: The site of YORK II, erected over the River Orne between the main bridge and the sea in 25 hours. The approach track can just be seen in the foreground, June 1973.

1. Timber Yard.

2. Site of the level crossing.

3. Where the German was shot.

4. The road through Troarn.

5. The present Troarn bridge.

6. The track.

bicycle. *(Photo 3)* They pulled the unlucky man off his bicycle, and because he began to shout they killed him; but they foolishly did it with a Sten gun and so gave the alert to the town.

Stealth was useless after that; Roseveare trod on the gas and they went into town at full speed, but the overloaded jeep and trailer would only do about thirty-five miles an hour, and it seemed to be crawling. Soon they were under fire from the houses. Sapper Moon had somehow been left behind: the remaining seven passengers all fired back with Sten guns and a Bren. At a bend in the road they saw the long, wide, straight main street of the town stretched out for a mile before them, downhill towards the bridge. *(Photo 4)* There the firing was intense: every doorway seemed to be hiding a German with some sort of gun: a cone of tracer came up the street towards them. Roseveare drove on, with his foot hard down on the floorboards. The overloaded jeep ground slowly forward. The passengers blazed away in all directions. It was the hill which saved the situation. On the downward grade, the jeep picked up speed, went faster and faster, swerved from side to side of the road as the trailer swayed behind, and tore out of the town and down to the river valley pursued by shots of a heavy machine gun. They came to the bridge, and found it had not been guarded. *(Photo 5)* Sapper Peachey, who had acted as rear gunner with the Bren, had disappeared; none of them knew if he had been shot, or had lost his balance and fallen off the trailer. They unloaded 39 General Wade charges, and five minutes later the job was done and the centre span of the bridge had dropped in the river, leaving a gap of almost 20 feet. They drove the jeep up a side track *(Photo 6)* as far as it would go and then ditched it *(Photo 7)* just as the sun was rising; and by wading through bogs and swimming over creeks, they reached the airborne perimeter again that afternoon.

Later in the morning another party under Sgt. Shrubsole fought their way back to the bridge and after capturing five prisoners, demolished the next span, leaving a 40 foot gap, together with sinking some boats and punts in the river.

The new bridge which is to be seen today was only completed recently. The old bridge was a five-span masonry arch bridge. The timber yard where the medical stores were unloaded from the jeep can be seen, but the level crossing and railway track disappeared in the fifties. However, the position of the barbed wire barrier can be ascertained from the old station, still standing. One can also follow the track down which Major Roseveare

The railway over the bridge was a continuation of the line through Troan and has recently been removed. The bridge is now used by a local construction company.

The road bridge 200 yards along the river bank which was destroyed, was a light steel girder type and the present stone bridge was built by the French in 1945. The glider crashed midway between the two bridges in the river.

7. Probable site of the ditched jeep.

drove the jeep and finally ditched it. This is on the north side of the road, 100 yards west of the bridge.

BURES ROAD and RAIL BRIDGES

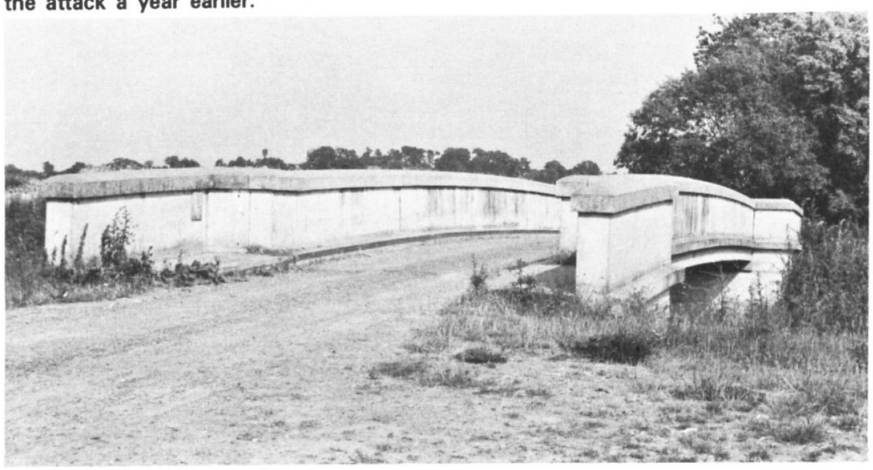
Bures road and railway bridge were both destroyed by a group from Major Roseveare's party of the 3rd Parachute Brigade.

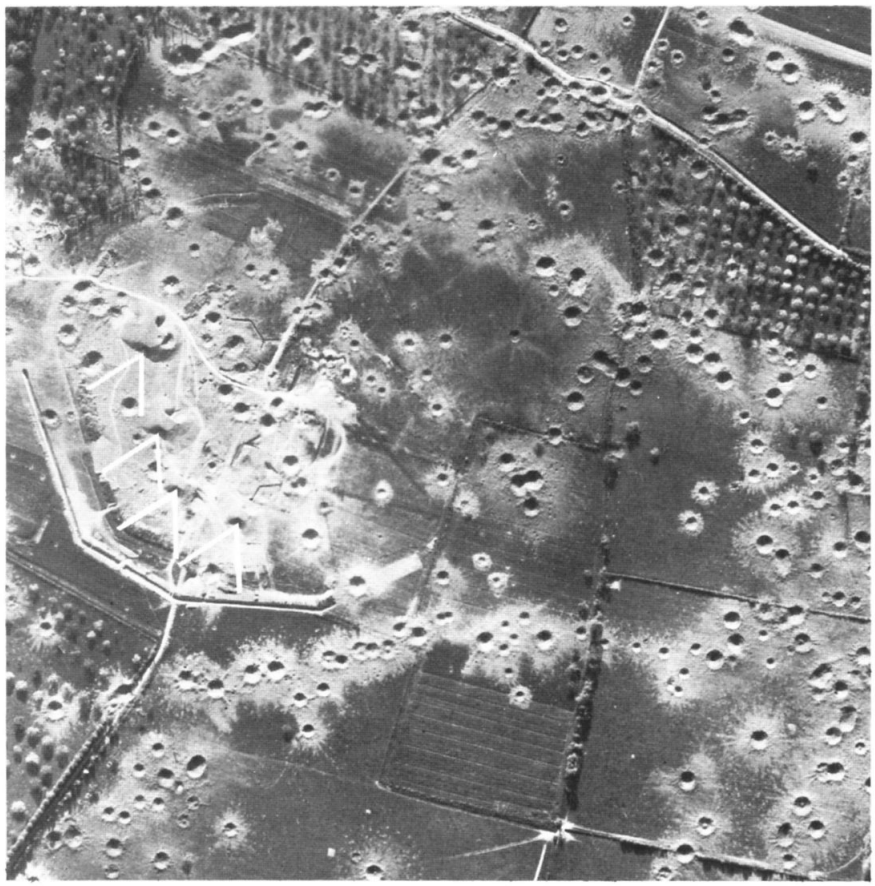
After leaving Major Roseveare's party, Captain Juckes led his men to the bridges which they reached unopposed at about 6.30 a.m. Work immediately started to demolish the two bridges. Lieutenant Shaves' group worked on the road bridge and Lieutenant Forster the railway bridge. Both bridges were blown at 9.30 a.m. and a punt also sunk. They also tried to unload a jeep and six pounder gun from a glider which had crashed in the river 100 yards from the railway bridge but without success.

Above: Standing on the site of the railway track in 1973 looking towards the rail bridge at Bures.

Below: The glider crashed into the river at this point.

Below: The new road bridge at Bures, built in 1945, to replace that destroyed in the attack a year earlier.





Aerial photograph of the battery at Merville with the casements arrowed. Bomb craters and the anti-tank ditch can clearly be seen. (IWM).

Merville battery

To the 9th Battalion had fallen the most dangerous mission of all, the destruction of the coastal battery near Merville. The battalion was under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel T. B. H. Otway, Royal Ulster Rifles. Otway received his orders on April 2nd and had therefore only two months to rehearse the operation for which he was allowed *carte blanche*. A spot in England at West Woodhay near Newbury, where conditions were very similar to those subsequently encountered in Normandy, was chosen. It was good agricultural land in full production, but Otway obtained the use of it in forty-eight hours, though to do so permission had to be obtained from no less than seven different ministries in Whitehall, a record which should surely stand to the credit of the Parachute Regiment. Here in a week the sappers built a scale model of the battery, its shape and dimensions being known to them from the air photographs available. Tubular scaffolding took the place of the guns. Not only was the actual objective itself reproduced, so also were the approaches to it. Four mechanical excavators and six large bulldozers, brought on tank transporters from as far away as Liverpool and Plymouth, worked night and day, 'the hours of darkness being illuminated by the headlights of vehicles'.

To keep the projected operation a profound secret was naturally of the highest importance, and very stringent measures were adopted. No one without a special pass signed by the commanding officer himself could make use of any road in the neighbourhood, and a number of attractive girls, specially briefed for the purpose, were introduced into the area with orders to extract all the information they could from the parachute troops. In this they failed utterly, though the whole plan was known to every officer and man, the only piece of knowledge withheld being the actual name and whereabouts of the battery. Such elaborate precautions interfered with the lives of the local inhabitants, most of whom took them in good part. 'But a number, eager to maintain the rights of property, had to be pacified by drinks in the mess.'

Rehearsals by day and night were frequent. Most were conducted with live ammunition, and continued until every one of the thirty-five officers and six hundred other ranks composing the battalion knew exactly what his part was and how to play it. On 31st May the Battalion was moved to Broadwell and briefed. The briefing lasted five days, and every man attending was required to submit to his immediate superior his own sketch, drawn from memory, of the position he was to occupy. In addition to the assault by the 9th Battalion three gliders, carrying volunteers from 9th Battalion and No. 591 Parachute Squadron, Royal Engineers, were to crash-land on the top of the battery, regarding which a large amount of information had been collected. The guns were said to be of 150-mm. calibre mounted in concrete emplacements twelve feet high and five feet deep facing north-west. The concrete itself was six feet six inches thick, and in addition earth twelve feet thick surrounded two of the casemates. Access to them was by means of steel doors. The strength of the garrison was thought to be two hundred all ranks (it was in fact one hundred and thirty). The colonel commanding them was a newcomer, the previous occupant of the post having lost it through his love of the bottle. This had led him to indulge in many excesses of which the final and fatal was a ride on the switch-back merry-go-round at the local fair near Merville. As soon as he was well aboard one of the cars, the local inhabitants bribed the owner of the switch-back to keep it in continuous motion for as long as he could. For upwards of two hours the German colonel, deathly sick, was whirled up and down and round and round. When at last it stopped he was taken to his billet in a state of collapse.

To defend their guns the garrison disposed of several machine-guns and one dual-purpose 20-mm. gun. Some twenty weapon pits were plotted on the air photographs. Nor was this all: the position, which measured approximately four hundred yards by four hundred was surrounded by a cattle fence, and a minefield one hundred yards wide, bounded on its inner side by a concertina fence of barbed wire fifteen feet thick and five feet high. Isolated minefields had been laid across all likely approaches to the battery, and an anti-tank ditch, four hundred yards long, dug on the west and north-west. If ever defenders could claim that they were holding an impregnable position, the garrison of the battery at Merville could surely do so. Around it on every side were open fields and orchards, much scarred to the south by bomb craters, for Bomber Command had been very active and had attacked the battery more than once, scoring two direct hits on a casemate, neither of which had penetrated the concrete.

It was essential for the battery to be destroyed half an hour before the first assault

This is the area south of Inkpen in Berkshire in 1973, where the dummy battery was constructed for the rehearsals before the operation. The line of the anti-tank ditch that was dug, can still be seen.

Two of the empty emplacements photographed in June 1973.

craft touched down on the beaches. The nearest suitable dropping zone was two thousand four hundred yards away, and the earliest moment at which the advance party of the parachutists could jump was 00.20 hours. Were the attack to be unsuccessful the battery was to be shelled by the Navy. It was therefore decided that the attack should begin at 04.30 hours, and the naval bombardment at 05.30 hours, thus leaving the battalion one hour to overrun the position and be clear of it.

The plan of attack was elaborate and Otway divided his force into eleven separate parties, each with a definite task. Among them were the organisation party at the rendezvous, the battery reconnaissance party, a taping party of one officer and eight other ranks to show the way, a breaching company, an assault company, and a reserve company. To these were added the glider assault party of three officers and forty-seven other ranks of the battalion and one officer and seven other ranks of the 591st Parachute Squadron, Royal Engineers. Each man wore a jumping smock with a skull and crossbones marked in luminous paint on the left breast. In addition, there were two sniping parties armed with Bren guns and anti-tank rifles, and a diversion party, two of whom could speak German (these were armed with Piats and Bren guns), a firm base party to organise the spot from which the battalion was to launch the assault, and finally what was known as the glider element, made up of five gliders carrying special heavy equipment which included flame throwers, two six-pounder anti-tank guns and three jeeps loaded with ammunition, scaling ladders, Bangalore torpedoes, and duralumin footbridges.

The plan was as follows. The rendezvous organisation and battery reconnaissance parties, ten strong, were to land from an Albemarle, mark the dropping zone and reconnoitre a route to the battery through its defences. Between 00.30 hours and 00.40 hours a very heavy weight of four-thousand-pound bombs was to be dropped by a hundred Lancasters. During the bombing the glider element carrying the special equipment was to land as close as it could to the battalion rendezvous, and have unloaded their cargo in time for the battalion to make use of it when it dropped. The taping party was also to land and, equipped with Polish mine detectors, to clear three paths through the minefield. The commander of the reconnaissance party was to meet the battalion at a cross-roads north-east of the village of Gonneville and lead it to the firm base which he had previously chosen, and which was to be about three hundred yards outside the perimeter to the south-east. To cover the battalion a company of the Canadian Parachute Battalion was detailed to be in readiness.

The assault itself was to be led by the breaching platoons, three in number, which formed the breaching company. Its task was to blow gaps in the wire, whereupon the reserve and assault companies following the tapes were to dash through and to make straight for the battery, protected by two sniping parties. The main attack was to be delivered from the south-east with a demonstration against the gate facing north. The three gliders which were to crash on top of the battery were to be released at a height of six thousand feet at 04.24 hours, one and a half minutes later a bugle was to sound reveille, whereupon mortars from the firm base would fire star shells to illuminate the target. At 04.28 hours the bugler would sound the 'Fall-in', which would be the signal for all fire to cease. The first glider was to land at 04.30 hours, and the bugler would then blow 'Lights out' to stop the firing of star shells.

Naval bombardment parties in touch with H.M.S. *Arethusa*, ordered to open fire on the battery at 05.30 hours if the assault failed, were to drop with the battalion. As soon as the battery was captured, yellow flares were to be lit, and the battalion would then move off to its firm base, reorganise and set out for the high ground on which stood the village of Le Plein, block the roads leading from Franceville Plage to Le Plein and seize a German headquarters at Salenelles.

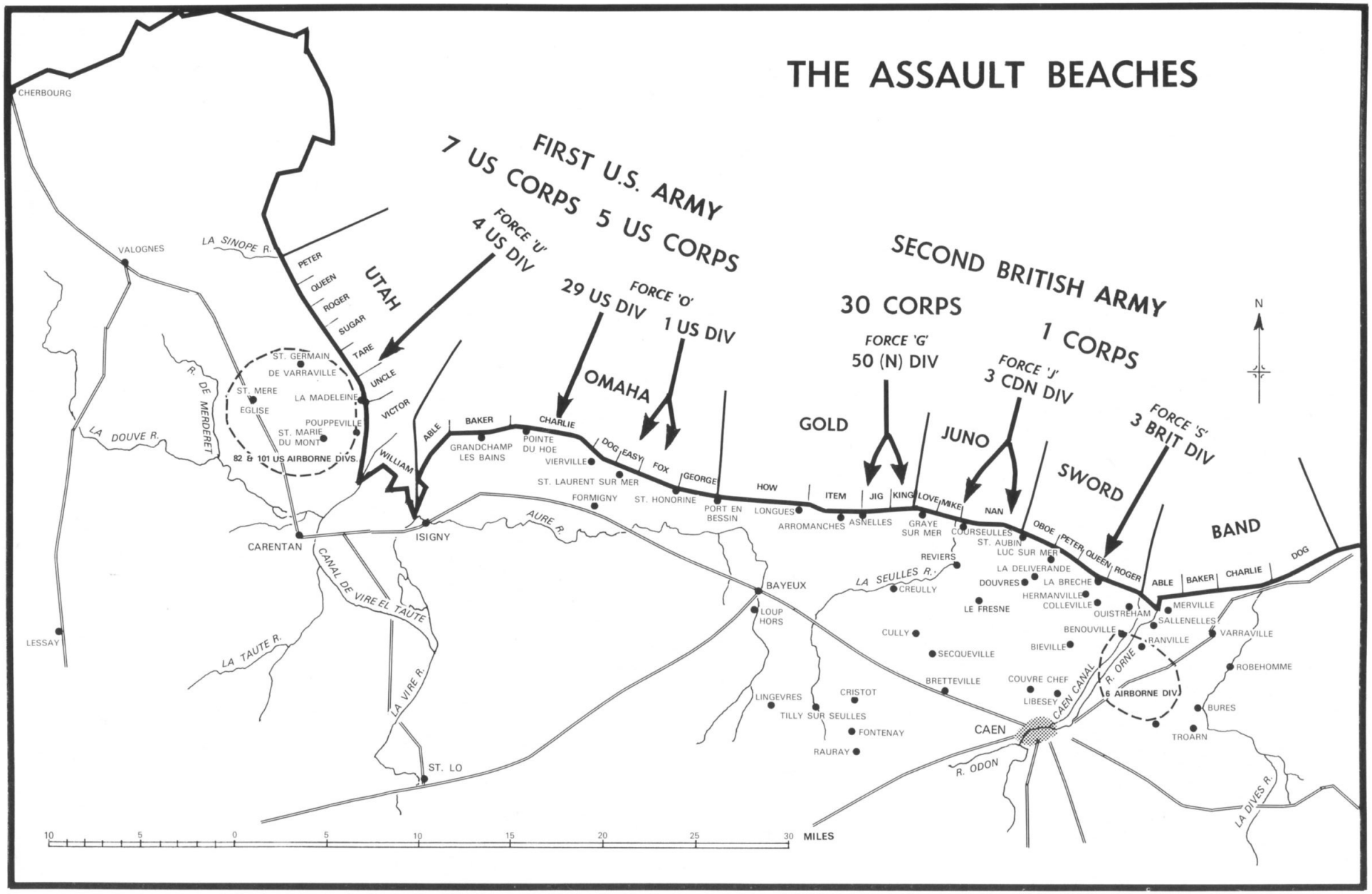
Such was the objective and such the plan for seizing it. It was explained yet again to every officer and man at the final briefing by the commanding officer. He was followed by the R.A.F. station commander who, having wished them all good luck, committed himself to the rash statement that his pilots had never missed a dropping zone or been late in reaching one. 'It was lucky for him,' records one who survived to write an account of what happened, 'that there was no chance of any discussion on this point after the operation.'

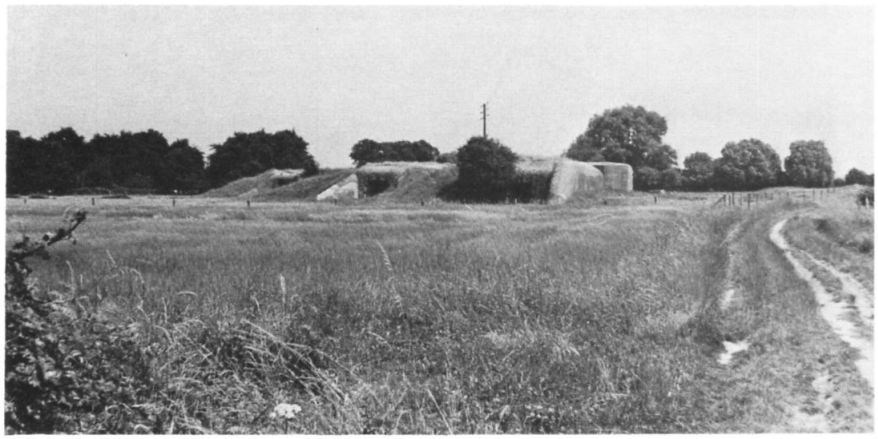
On the morning of 4th June the Reverend J. Gwinnett, C.F., the battalion's chaplain, conducted a drumhead service, at which a special Pegasus flag, made by the Women's Voluntary Services at Oxford, was dedicated. It was offered by the men of the Permanent Staff of the Transit Camp who as a result of parachute operations were no longer fit for action. Gwinnett's discourse, which was most moving, was on the theme 'Fear knocked at the door, Faith opened it and there was nothing there.' Gale was blunter. 'The Hun thinks,' he said, 'that only a bloody fool will go there. That's why we're going.'

The glider assault force and the rendezvous and reconnaissance parties took off from Brize Norton and Harwell, the rest of the battalion earlier at 23.10 hours. All went well until four minutes from the dropping zone, when moderate anti-aircraft fire was encountered. This was particularly unfortunate, for many of the pilots, who were already finding it hard to distinguish between the mouths of the Orne and the Dives, began to take evasive action, to the great peril and discomfort of their passengers. A man with an eighty-pound load and a parachute on top of it cannot climb quickly to his feet again if he has been thrown down in the confined space of an aircraft's fuselage; and when the green lights came on the men composing many of the sticks were still rolling on the floor. In the result the battalion, instead of being dropped in a concentrated area, one thousand nine hundred yards by eight hundred, was spread over fifty square miles of Normandy, one stick landing as far away as thirty miles from the battery. On the other hand the battery reconnaissance and rendezvous parties dropped at their correct time and on the right spot. They at once set about laying out their lights and signs, and the reconnaissance party moved in darkness towards the battery, narrowly escaping elimination from the shower of four-thousand-pound bombs dropped by the Lancasters. Not one of them hit the target but a number of cattle in the nearby fields were killed and wounded.

Otway himself, like many of his men, had been flung untimely out of his Dakota as it was taking evasive action. His knowledge of the locality, gained by the study of maps and photographs, enabled him to recognise the spot on which he was about to land: it was a German headquarters. He and two men, of whom one was his batman, fell into the garden beside it, and were at once fired at by the Germans inside who fortunately seem to have been armed with nothing more lethal than pistols. One of the parachutists silenced this fusillade by throwing a brick through the window, which the Germans evidently mistook for a grenade. Otway's batman fell through the glass roof of the greenhouse but was able to rejoin him at the rendezvous.

On reaching it Otway found a condition of affairs which might well have quelled a stouter heart. To quote from his staccato official report: 'By 02.50 hours the battalion


THE ASSAULT BEACHES
FIRST U.S. ARMY
7 US CORPS 5 US CORPS
SECOND BRITISH ARMY
30 CORPS
1 CORPS
FORCE 'U'
4 US DIV
29 US DIV
FORCE 'O'
1 US DIV
FORCE 'G'
50 (N) DIV
FORCE 'J'
3 CDN DIV
FORCE 'S'
3 BRIT DIV
UTAH
OMAHA
GOLD
JUNO
SWORD
BAND
N
CHERBOURG
VALOGNES
LA SINOPE R.
PETER
QUEEN
ROGER
SUGAR
TARE
UNCLE
VICTOR
WILLIAM
ABLE
BAKER
CHARLIE
DOG
EASY
FOX
GEORGE
HOW
ITEM
JIG
KING
LOVE
MIKE
NAN
OBOE
PETER
QUEEN
ROGER
ABLE
BAKER
CHARLIE
DOG
ST. GERMAIN DE VARRAVILLE
ST. MERE EGLISE
LA MADELEINE
POUPPEVILLE
ST. MARIE DU MONT
82 & 101 US AIRBORNE DIVS.
R. DE MERDERET
LA DOUVE R.
GRANDCHAMP LES BAINS
POINTE DU HOE
VIERVILLE
ST. LAURENT SUR MER
FORMIGNY
ST. HONORINE
PORT EN BESSIN
LONGUES
ARROMANCHES
ASNELLES
GRAYE SUR MER
COURSEULLES
ST. AUBIN
LUC SUR MER
REVIERS
LA DELIVERANDE
DOUVRES
LA BRECHE
CREULLY
HERMANVILLE
COLLEVILLE
LE FRESNE
OUISTREHAM
MERVILLE
SALLENELLES
BENOUVILLE
RANVILLE
VARRAVILLE
CULLY
SECQUEVILLE
BIEVILLE
ROBEHOMME
BRETTEVILLE
COUVRE CHEF
LIBESEY
CAEN CANAL
R. ORNE
6 AIRBORNE DIV.
BURES
TROARN
LINGEVRES
CRISTOT
TILLY SUR SEULLES
FONTENAY
RAURAY
CAEN
R. ODON
LA DIVES R.
CARENTAN
ISIGNY
AURE R.
CANAL DE VIRE ET TAUTE
LA TAUTE R.
LA VIRE R.
ST. LO
LESSAY
BAYEUX
LA SEULLES R.
LOUP HORS
10 5 0 5 10 15 20 25 30 MILES



Left: A general view of the area in 1973 from the central track.
Below: A close up showing the thick covering of earth which protected and camouflaged the four-gun battery.

had grown to one hundred and fifty strong with twenty lengths of Bangalore torpedo. Each company was approximately thirty strong. Enough signals to carry on—no three-inch mortars—one machine-gun—one half of one sniping party—no six-pounder guns—no jeeps or trailers or any glider stores—no sappers—no field ambulance, but six unit medical orderlies—no mine detectors—one company commander missing. The commanding officer decided to advance immediately.'

'A' Company was in the van, followed by Otway and such of his battalion headquarters as had arrived. Then came a small number of the diversion party, then thirty men of 'B' Company with some Bangalore torpedoes. They were followed by twenty men of 'C' Company, the battalion medical officer, and the medical orderlies. This small but very resolute force set out along country lanes and tracks bordered by high banks and thick hedges, on the other side of which could be seen the dim forms of apple trees heavily laden. They halted often to make sure by the light of the moon that they were moving in the right direction, and at one moment successfully slipped by a patrol of the enemy.

On the way to the form base they met, as arranged, the battery reconnaissance party under Major G. Smith. They had cut the outer cattle fence, penetrated the minefield, and lain for half an hour beside the concertina wire, spotting the enemy's posts by listening to the talk and coughing of the sentries. During their approach to the minefield an enemy patrol had passed within two feet of the ditch in which they were crouching. They had in due course been joined by the taping party commanded by Captain P. Greenway. It had no tapes or mine detectors, but had marked the way through the minefield by scratching heel-marks in the dust. These tasks had been accomplished without a single casualty, though the officers and men employed on them had had to crawl forward on their hands and knees, feeling for trip wires, of which several were encountered.

At 04.30 hours the battalion reached the firm base where 'B' Company was divided into two breaching teams, and 'A' and 'C' Companies were joined together into one assault force consisting of four parties, each of twelve men, one party for each gun of the battery. So far the enemy had made no sign, but hardly had Otway and his men reached their firm base when six enemy machine-guns, all outside the perimeter, opened fire, and four more from inside it. There was one Vickers machine-gun with the assault force, and this successfully silenced three of the German machine-guns on one flank, while the diversion party, now only six men under Sergeant Knight, performed a similar task on the right flank on their way to the main gate.

At this crucial moment two of the three gliders carrying the special assault party could be seen circling low over the battery, tracer from the 20-mm. guns pouring into them. The third glider had not arrived, for the tow-rope parted early, and it had had to land in England to the chagrin of its occupants. The two gliders which reached the battery were piloted by Staff-Sergeants S. G. Bone and D. F. Kerr. Bone's glider, with Captain R. Gordon-Brown on board, had been severely strained in mid-Channel by the sudden opening of its parachute arrester gear. It and its tug, with Pilot-Officer Garnett at the controls, had also been repeatedly hit by anti-aircraft fire, but this did not prevent the combination from circling the battery four times before the glider was released.

The plan for illuminating the battery with star shells had gone awry, for there were no shells nor mortars from which to fire them, and Staff-Sergeant Bone in consequence at first mistook the village of Merville for the battery. He turned away in time, but landed four miles from the objective. All within disembarked unhurt and under Gordon-Brown presently reached Le Mesnil where they fought for two days in defence of brigade headquarters and then rejoined the battalion. With them was the special flag made by the Oxford Women's Voluntary Services. It was to remain with the battalion for the rest of the war and to be carried in every action.

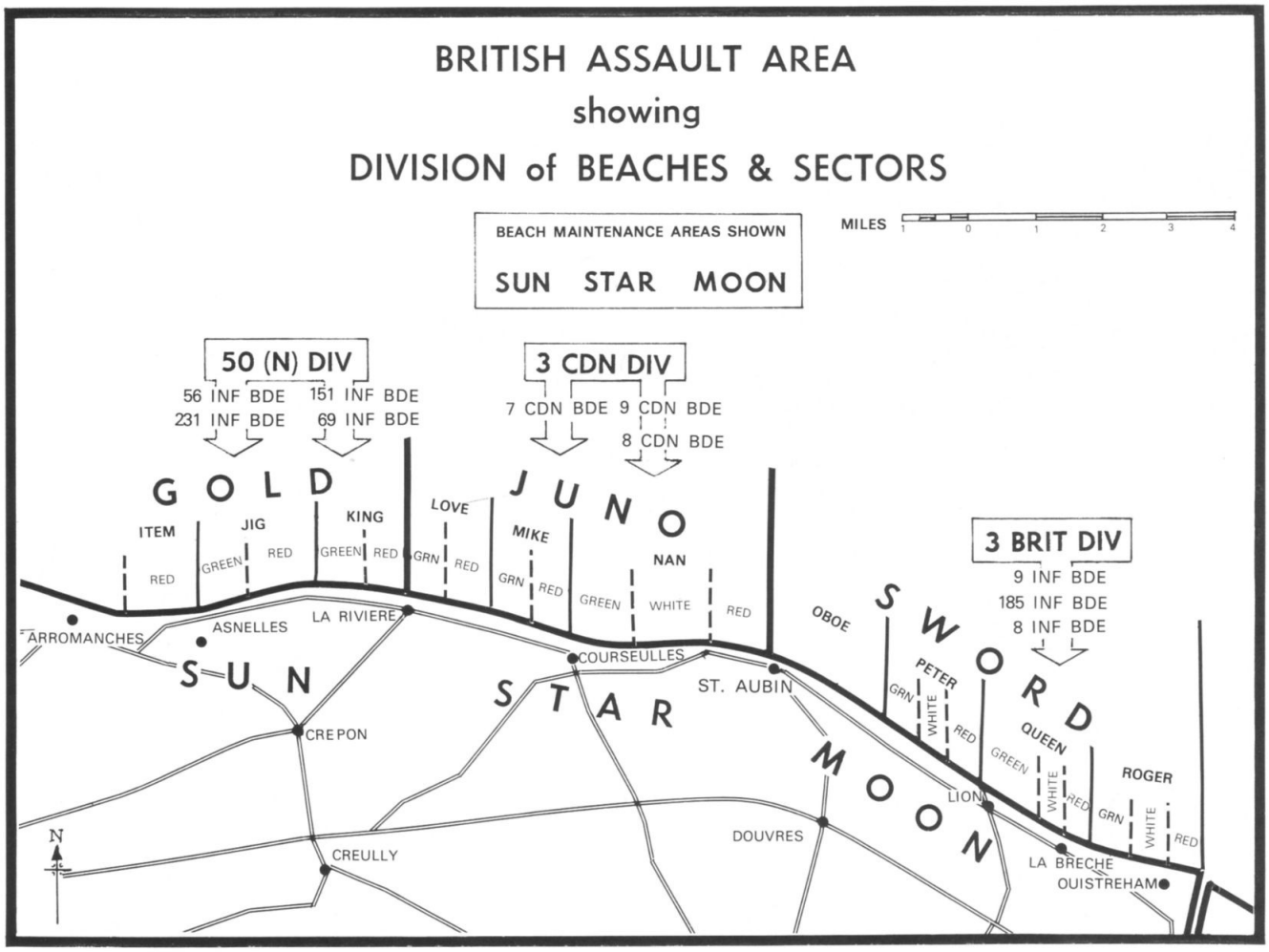
Staff-Sergeant Kerr had better fortune. With four men hit on board from anti-aircraft fire, and with his glider beginning to smoulder, he prepared to land in a large field two hundred yards from the casemates. The wheels had indeed touched ground, when out of the darkness loomed a large white board with the word 'Minen' written on it and decorated with a skull and crossbones. Pulling back the control column, Kerr lifted the glider over the field and the hedge and sunken road beyond. He then crash-landed in an orchard some two hundred yards east of the fire base. He and his passengers, the wounded included, with Lieutenant A. Pond at their head, stumbled out of the glider, which had lost both wings and was on fire, and immediately engaged a platoon of the 1st/736th Regiment of the 716th Division of the German army. The ensuing fight lasted four hours, but the Germans were never able to come to the help of the battery's garrison.

Hardly had the occupants of the glider joined battle, when Otway gave the signal for the gaps in the wire to be blown. The assault parties then moved against the battery, but slowly, for bomb craters, wire and mines strewed the way. Nothing, however, could stop the indomitable troops whose average age was twenty-one—most of them, be it remembered in action for the first time. In due course they reached the guns and engaged in hand-to-hand combat with the German gunners. These resisted stoutly until one of them happened to catch sight of the badge on the battle smock of the parachutist. '*Fallschirm-jager*,' he yelled, whereupon he and his remaining comrades lost heart and surrendered.

Three guns were destroyed by Gammon bombs; and one by firing two shells at once through the barrel. The destruction was checked by Lieutenant M. Dowling, though mortally wounded. The success signal was lit half an hour before H.M.S. *Arethusa* was due to begin the bombardment, and to make certain that their victory should be made known, Lieutenant J. Loring, the battalion signals officer, pulled a somewhat crumpled carrier pigeon from the blouse of his battledress and flung it into the air. It duly arrived in England a few hours later.

After withdrawing to the firm base, Otway found that he had about eighty men still on their feet. About thirty casualities were being treated in the battalion aid post, set up in a ruined barn close by. Twenty of them were stretcher cases. One officer had been killed and four wounded, and sixty-five other ranks killed, wounded or missing. The wounded were left with Captain H. Watts, the medical officer, and with a German doctor and two orderlies, who took good care of them.

The guns captured and put out of action were found to be 75 millimetres, firing 13lb shells which would have been of negligible effect to the invasion fleet. A good view of the Merville Battery today can be had by walking along the track which runs from the right hand fork road to the north of Sallenelles. Mine clearing was still proceeding in 1946 but today only cows occupy the area which was so heavily defended in 1944. The anti-tank ditch in front of the four casemates has been filled in but can be traced by the line of the hedge.



NORMANDY 1973

3rd British Division assault on Queen beach

We have chosen Sword beach in the British sector which was the main assault area of the 3rd British Division for a more detailed description of the landings.

Landings by Commandos took place either side but one particular beach, code name Queen, which is west of Hermanville la Breche was the landing place for the 8th British Infantry Brigade.

THE PLAN

The map on this page shows the subdivision of Queen beach into Red, White and Green. What perhaps is the most famous of all D-Day pictures was taken on White beach and our title page picture shows the beach today.

It was planned that the 1st South Lancashires would land on Queen White and the 2nd East Yorks on Queen Red supported by DD tanks of the 13/18 Hussars.

On each beach, four exits were to be made and four zones, each of 225 yards, cleared of beach obstacles. The eight gapping teams each comprised two flail tanks, three AVRE's

Above: A Churchill tank and convoy of carriers at la Breche on D-Day. (IWM). Right: *After the Battle's* jeep in June 1973 at the place where the tank was parked.

Left: The Churchill is on the right of the photograph by the coastal road looking west. The tram lines can clearly be seen. (IWM).

Above: In 1973, now a pleasant seaside crossroads.

(one with bangalore torpedos and log carpet, the second with a bridge and the third a bobbin to lay a matting track) and one armoured angle-dozer, and the obstacle clearing teams of four flail tanks and four AVRE's.

Assault Demolition teams, one per infantry assault company, were equipped with explosives and flame-throwers for use against concrete emplacements surviving the initial bombardment.

H-Hour was set for 7.25 a.m. (different times for the landings were set for each beach, depending on the position of the obstacles and state of the tides).

THE DEFENCES

The beach was strewn with wooden ramps and posts with mines attached and steel hedgehogs. The beach was backed by dunes ten to fifteen feet high behind which was a minor road. Villas and houses with heavily mined sandy tracks between them lead to the main coastal road which runs parallel with the beach. This is the road shown in the photographs with the tram lines at the side. The tram lines were subsequently removed and concreted over to widen the road and no trace of them can now be seen. In the centre of the beach there was a zone with pill-boxes and concrete defences surrounded by mine-fields. There were no mines on the beach itself. Most minefields were marked by notices in German, sometimes French as well, and several dummy minefields with the skull and crossbones MINEN sign were set up. The latter often had pieces of steel plate around the edges to delay clearance. The whole beach was covered by the heavy shore batteries at Le Havre but the Allies planned to lay a smoke screen to hide them from the assault.

THE LANDING

At H-Hour the landing craft approached the beach. They found the first line of obstacles in five feet of water because of the heavy swell, making clearance difficult. The enemy was resisting heavily with small arms, morters and anti-tank guns. Many naval craft hit mines as they attempted to land.

It is difficult to determine who actually landed first. However we do know that of the initial gapping teams, seven landed successfully — on the eighth the first flail tank got ashore when the second was hit and jammed the landing craft ramps.

Engineers were soon at work with bulldozers clearing or crushing obstacles. Where possible they removed shells and mines from the defences. Flail tanks were hit by gunfire as they proceeded up the beach and more were immobilised by mines as they attempted to cross the dunes. The tide was coming in and as it did, confusion mounted, as manoevering room diminished. At the top, the slope of the beach increased to a gradient of 1 in 5 and as the tide reached high water only soft sand was left, which caused vehicles to bog down, having to be towed out. The first gap in the dunes was made on White beach, one hour after landing. Casualties at this stage amounted to 50 per cent of the vehicles and nearly 20 per cent of the troops.

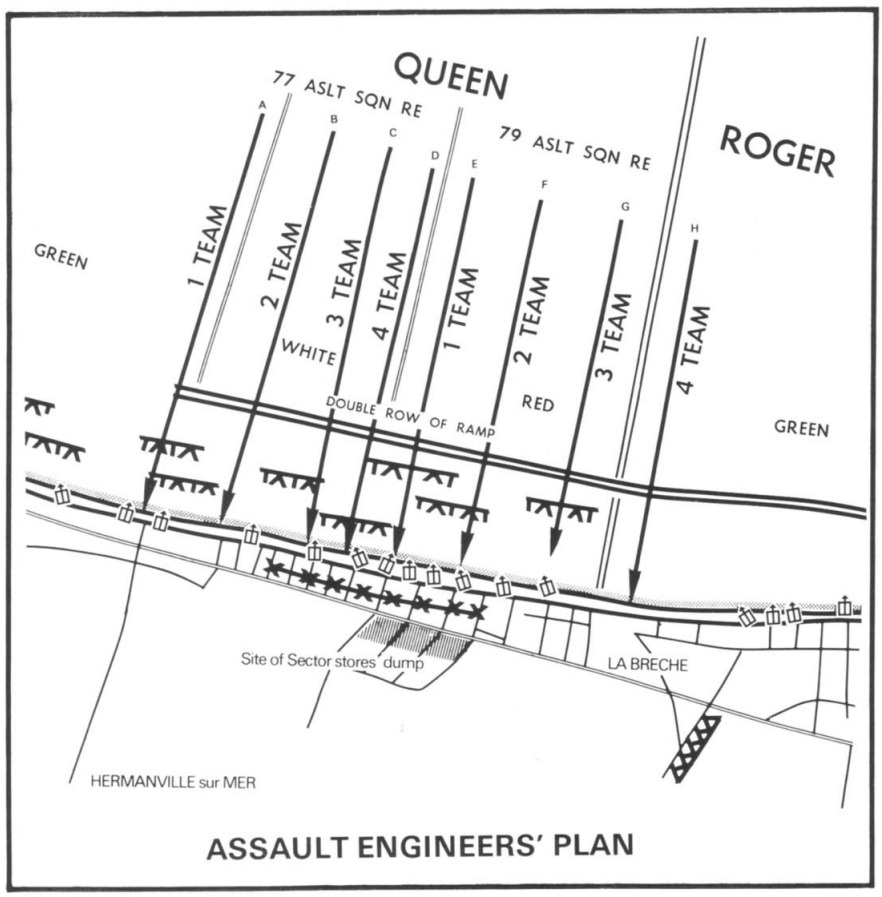
The assaulting infantry arrived and for a time there was considerable disorganisation as carriers sheltered behind dunes. Exits were made for tracked vehicles on Red and White beaches, which by H+2 hours had been extended to four on White and three on Red beach. Later exits for wheeled vehicles were made. Elements then started pushing inland to Hermanville sur Mer.

Our map shows the exits that were constructed, and by D+1 these were connected by a Sommerfeld track laid along the beach in front of the dunes.

The photographs selected were all taken around the cross roads behind the exit marked A on the map on the road leading to Hermanville sur Mer.

Of the eight gaps made in the dunes in 1944, only the position of three on Queen White and two on Queen Red remain. A sea wall promenade has been built over the greater part of the dunes. Only at the extreme eastern end of Queen Red have the dunes been left, and the end exit 'H' remains in its original state. It was concreted a few hours after touchdown.

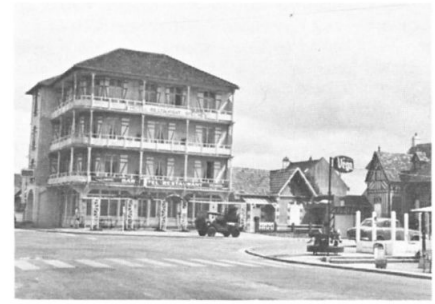
Many more holiday houses and chalets have been built along the complete area backing the beach and changing huts erected between the dunes. Except for the eastern end of Queen Red all the concrete fortifications have been removed. The occasional original house



ASSAULT ENGINEERS' PLAN

Left: German prisoners captured by the King's Shropshire Light Infantry on 6th June, being marched past the crossroads to the beach. (IWM).

Above: One of the *After the Battle* team mimics the German prisoners, 29 years later.



Left and above: A good comparison of the crossroads behind gap 'A' on D-Day and this year. Our solitary jeep remains to connect the past. (IWM).

Left and above: 'Caution left hand drive'. The same spot 6th June 1944—June 1973.

Above: This is the position of gap G on the map on the preceding page now incorporated into a new sea-wall promenade.

can still be discerned amongst the new (see photograph).

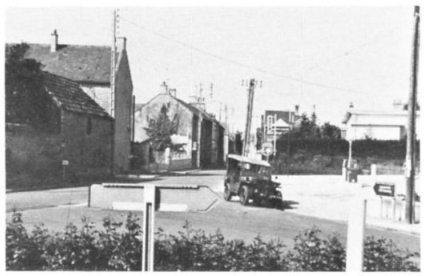
On D+ 7 the Beach Sub-Area Commander was holding a conference in a dug-out on Red beach. Eight German aircraft flew along the beach from Ouistreham. One was shot down and landed just beside them by a concrete beach marker. The remainder of the aircraft jettisoned their bombs over Hermanville sur Mer.

After the landings a large sector stores dump behind coast road (see map), had been built up consisting of 400 tons of ammunition and 100,000 gallons of petrol. On D+ 8 a German aircraft dropped a stick of bombs and blew it up. The site has now been built over — a large undergrowth covered mound remains to mark the spot.

At the end of the war, wrecks still remained on the beaches and on Red beach could be seen six vessels and two on White beach. The only ship that can still be seen, at low tide, is the French cruiser 'Courbet', built in 1911, which was sunk as part of the Gooseberry breakwater to protect Queen beach. Although it was sunk in shallow water, because she was flying a tricolour and a flag of the Cross of Lorraine, the Germans tried repeatedly to hit it. They failed to understand the ship's true purpose and on the night of 17th June it was torpedoed twice without, of course, affecting its efficiency as a blockship.

Above and left: Present day villagers talk outside a house on the coast road near Hermanville la Breche. (IWM).

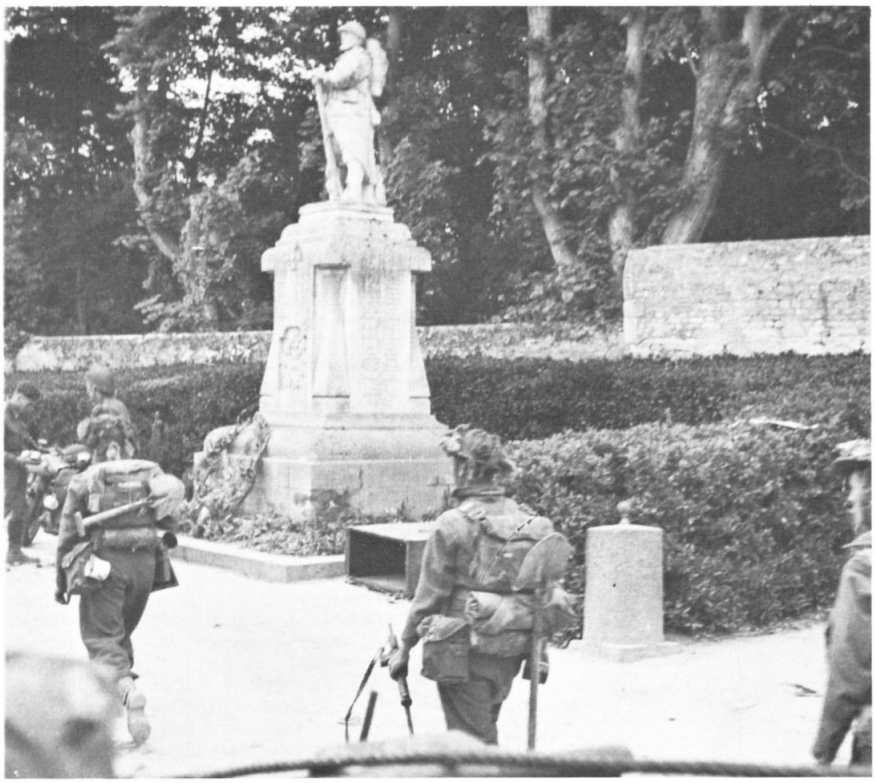
Far left: Present day location of the stores dump blown up in 1944.



Left: Opposite the Cafe de la Liberation in Hermanville sur Mer, traffic thunders past on D-Day. (IWM).
Above: Today a sign points to Hermanville War Cemetery, but M. Rene LeColley, owner of the cafe, still remembers that day in 1944 when the Allied forces arrived.

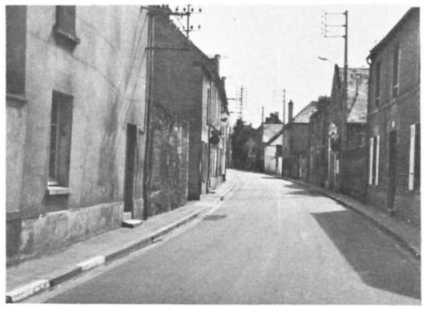
Left: Anti-tank guns were soon dug in, and bridge-laying tanks are parked opposite the cafe, at Hermanville sur Mer. (IWM).

Above: An empty road in June 1973.



Left: Troops march past a memorial to an earlier war, in Hermanville sur Mer. (IWM).

Above: June 1973.



Left: Captured German infantry, photographed on D+1 in Hermanville. Inhabitants watch in silence. (IWM).

Above: The same street in 1973, now used by holiday makers going to the beach.

Left: A tank crew-man died and Reverend Leach, padre of the 13th/18th Hussars reads the burial service on 7th June 1944 in a shady orchard. (IWM).

Above: *After the Battle's* editor returns to the same spot 29 years later.

NORMANDY 1973

Fitters re-fuel and re-arm a Typhoon on a beachhead airstrip in 1944. (IWM).

Le Fresne Camilly airstrip

Airfield and landing strip construction was considered to be one of the most pressing tasks after the initial landings so that aircraft could operate from close behind the front line. To this end Aircraft Construction Groups were detailed from the Royal Engineers to complete three kinds of airfield:—

EMERGENCY LANDING STRIPS (ELS)—A reasonably flat piece of ground roughly prepared to a minimum of 1,800 feet in length.

REFUELING AND REARMING STRIP (RRS)—A minimum length of 3,600 feet with two dispersal areas each of 100 x 50 yards at each end.

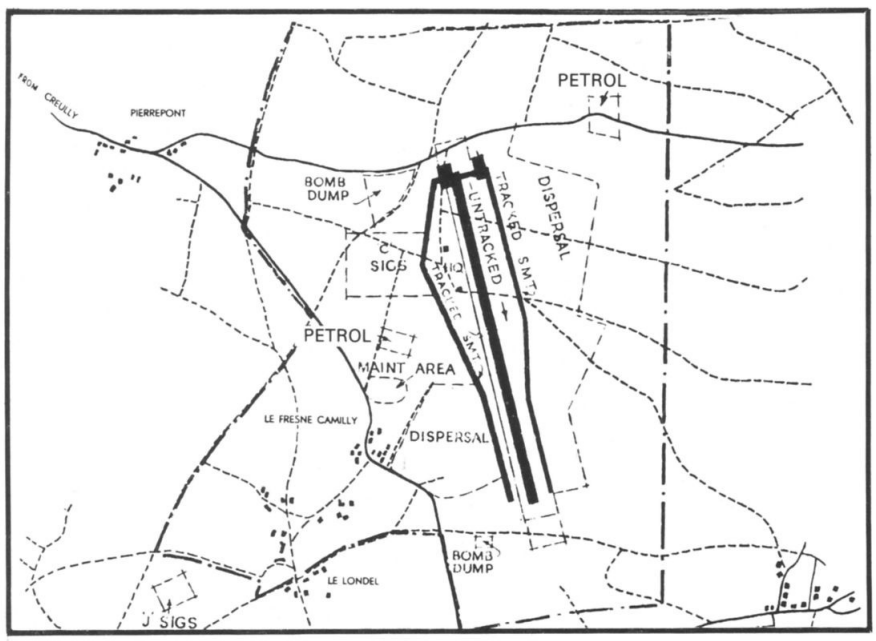
ADVANCED LANDING GROUND (ALG)—For fighters; a minimum length of 3,600 ft x 120 ft with dispersal for 54 aircraft. For fighter-bombers a length of 5,000 ft was required.

It was planned to construct one ELS in the British sector and two in the American on D-Day. In the event the British one at Asnelles was not completed until D+ 1 and only one of the American strips was operational. By D+ 25, 27 airfields were planned but only 18 were able to be completed by that date.

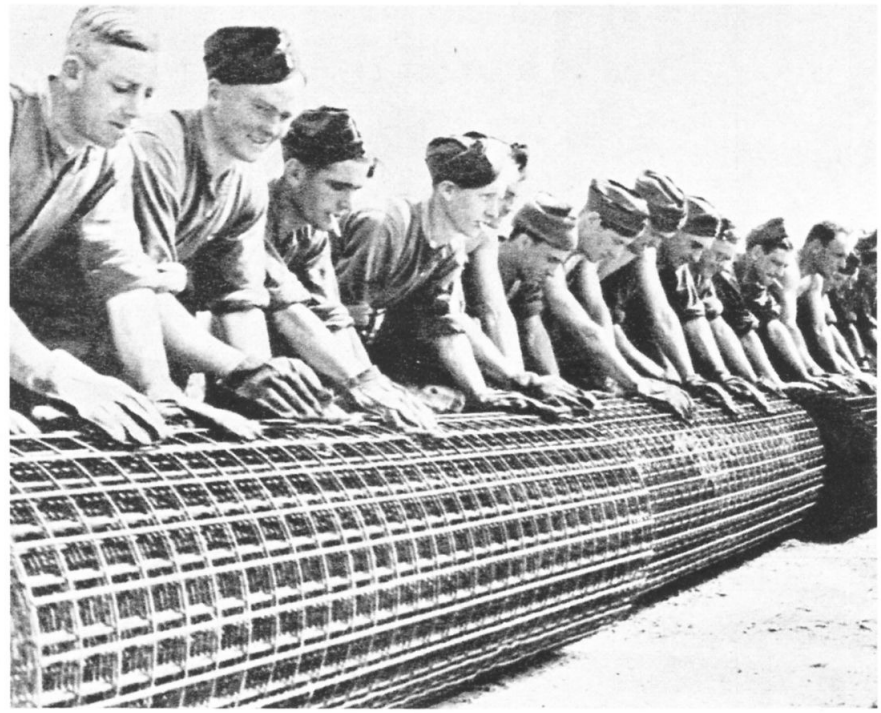
Illustrative of these airfields was the ALG constructed at Le Fresne Camilly, codenamed B5, on 9th-17th June. After discussing the layout with the RAF Commander, the site was first reconoitered on June 7th by Captain Binney of No. 88 Construction Company on a motor cycle but as the Germans were still in the area work could not start until D+ 3. The airfield was to be used by three squadrons of Typhoon fighter bombers and therefore a 5,000 ft runway was necessary. The area was searched immediately for mines, after which burnt out tanks and anti-landing posts were removed. Two ten foot hedges crossed the area as well as power lines both of which had to be cleared. Scraping, grading, rolling and filling were completed with mechanical plant, the group having at its disposal 4 motor graders, 4 eight cubic yard scrapers, 7 crawlers, 6 rollers, 2 blade graders and 16 three-ton tipper lorries. Work continued in two shifts in spite of occasional shelling, protection being provided by the RAF Regiment.

It was planned to use a new form of Steel Mesh Tracking (SMT) which was a wire meshing supplied in rolls which were subsequently clipped together and pegged to the ground. Altogether over 100,000 square yards were used at Le Fresne Camilly although initially there was only enough SMT for the runway itself. This was laid at the rate of 90 sq. ft. per man per hour. The first aircraft to use the strip was a Dakota landing to evacuate wounded soldiers but this raised such a cloud of dust that a second Dakota landing immediately afterwards crashed into the first one. To solve the dust problem diesel oil was sprayed on the runway but was not entirely successful. Plans had to be made for damping with water jets.

The first RAF Typhoon squadron landed on June 17th and during July made 1,365 sorties from le Fresne Camilly destroying over 100 enemy tanks and vehicles.



The map gives the exact location of airfield B5 at Le Fresne Camilly. In Normandy, although all the airfields have been turned back to farming land, the location of a site is easily recognisable as the fields are hedged with sections of SMT (see photograph). At Le Fresne a track crosses the direction of the runway and three strips of rough grass can still be seen. The position of the various dumps, petrol stores, bombs and dispersals are now all arable land. What strikes one most when one is flying over Normandy, is how so many squadrons could operate from so many airfields in such a close area always subjected to shelling, smoke and bombing.

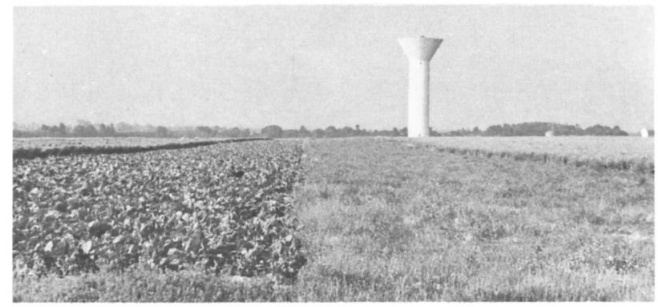


Right: Many hands make light work! SMT wire mesh tracking being laid on a Normandy airstrip. (IWM).

Below left: The entrance track to what was le Fresne Camilly advanced landing ground in 1944. Note that a farmer has used the SMT to fence his field.

Below right: Rough grass between cultivated fields still indicates where the runway was laid at le Fresne.

Bottom: The site of le Fresne Camilly ALG June 1973.



NORMANDY 1973

Consolidating the bridgehead

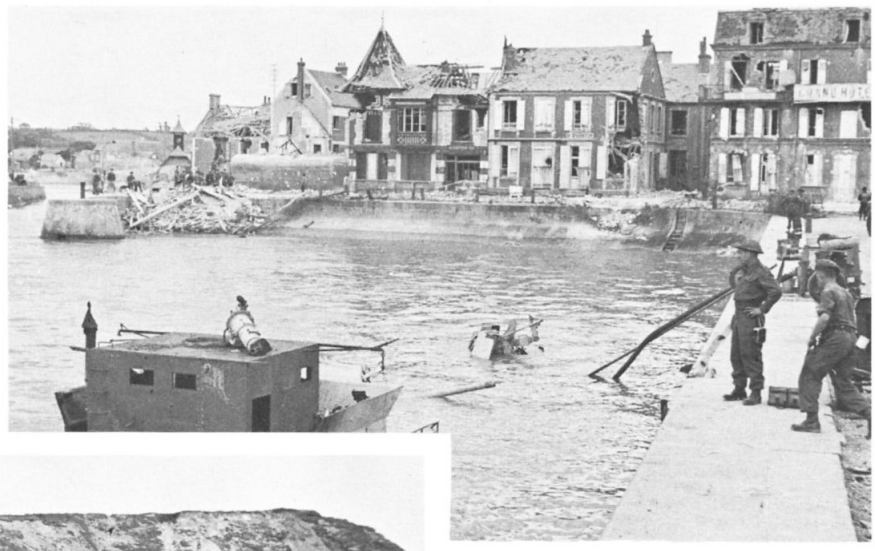
PORT EN BESSIN

Western-most limit of British beaches adjoining Omaha, one of the few ports in the assault area and strongly guarded.

The tide had risen causing three of the five landing craft bringing the 47th (Royal Marine) Commando ashore at le Hemel to be sunk by explosives on submerged beach obstacles. Many Marines swam ashore and about 300 men concentrated at the back of the beach before moving off across country towards Port-en-Bessin. After a sharp fight at la Rosiere in the evening of D-Day they dug in on Hill 72, 1½ miles south of Port-en-Bessin. Early next day the attack began in the narrow streets of the port. In the afternoon *HMS Emerald* and rocket firing Typhoons attacked the cliff strong points and the west cliff was taken before dusk. Fighting continued during the night and at 4.00 a.m. next morning the German Commander surrendered with 300 men. Surveys began immediately of its facilities. By the 12th June the port was operating and by the beginning of July it was coming into operation as the British petrol depot, using buoyed 6 inch pipes, through which ships offshore discharged their cargoes.

General Sir Bernard L. Montgomery, Commander-in-Chief 21st Army Group and overall Land Forces Commander for 'Overlord', talks to Naval and Military Commanders at Port-en-Bessin. Photographed by Sergeant Morris on 10th June 1944 (IWM), it contrasts with the holiday scene today.

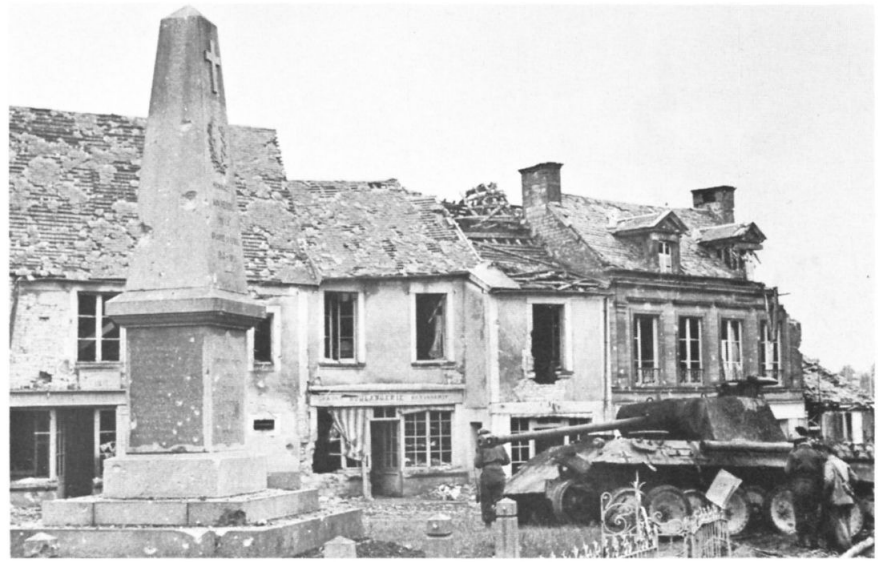
Right: A German flak ship sunk in Port-en-Bessin harbour photographed on 10th June 1944. (IWM). One wonders if these holiday makers realise what once occupied the place of the fishing boat.

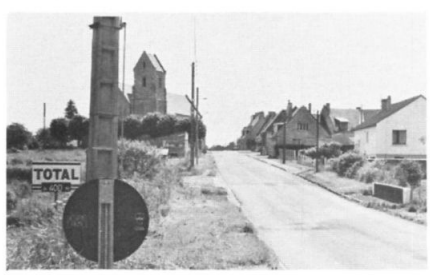


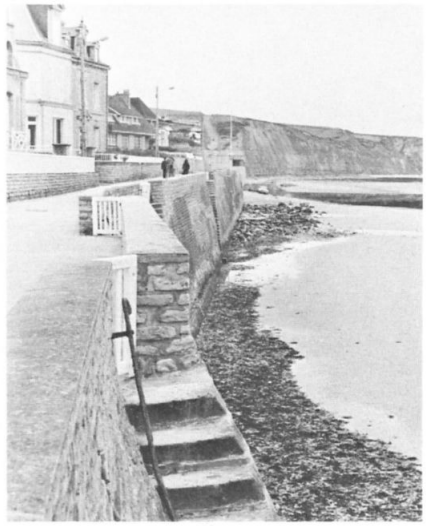
Below: A Bren carrier drives ashore from a landing craft at Port-en-Bessin. (IWM). Today the harbour looks almost as it did nearly 30 years ago.

LINGEVRES

These remarkable pictures were taken on 20th June 1944, after the fierce tank battle which preceded the capture of the village. Two tanks lie in the ditches on the side of the hill leading to the village from the west. A Sherman and Panther face each other not ten yards apart across the village square. The 1914-18 War Memorial still shows the same unrepaired damage today. (IWM).







Left and above: This picture was taken on 28th June after the storm which greatly damaged the artificial harbour and craft sheltering in it. Note wreckage on the sea front. (IWM). Today the same spot is deserted.

ARROMANCHES

Arromanches was the point selected to build Mulberry 'B', the pre-fabricated harbour towed across the channel. Captured by the 231st Brigade on the evening of D-Day after the cruiser *HMS Emerald* had shelled the four 105mm guns south of the village. On the following day the first blockships to form the Gooseberry breakwaters were sunk with explosive charges. Later 'Phoenix' concrete cassions were sunk to form the arms of the harbour and 'Whale' floating roadway installed. The storm which raged from June 19th-22nd damaged the harbour considerably completely disintegrating six cassions on the western arm. Because the American Mulberry 'A' at Omaha was totally wrecked it was decided to abandon the US Harbour and salvage what was left to repair the Arromanche harbour. In the end it was used for eight months instead of the planned three months.

Centre: **Engineers have blown a gap in the sea wall and are preparing the ground for the end of the floating roadway. This was one of the exits for transport from the beach. (IWM).**

Above: **The position of the gap is easily found, having been repaired with stone. In the centre, the Hotel de Normandie.**

Right: **The town of Arromanches with the remains of the concrete cassions photographed June 1973.**

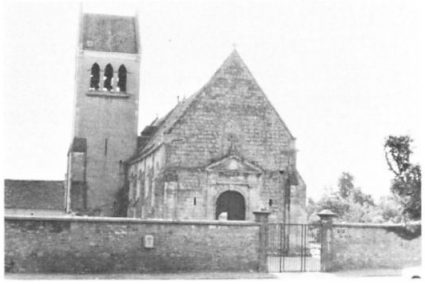
COUVRE CHEF

Left and above today: Field Marshall Montgomery, photographed by Sergeant Morris on 11th July 1944, surveys the ruins of Couvre Chef which was the target for 400 RAF bombers before the attack on Caen. (IWM).

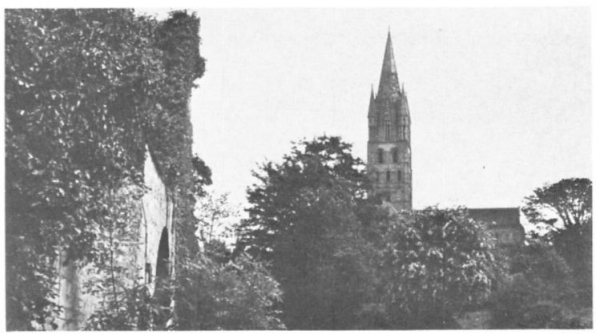
BENOUVILLE

Right: German snipers used this church tower at Benouville before shell fire dislodged them on 10th June. (IWM).

Below: The tower repaired today.



SECQUEVILLE Right and Below: A Sherman tank advances.



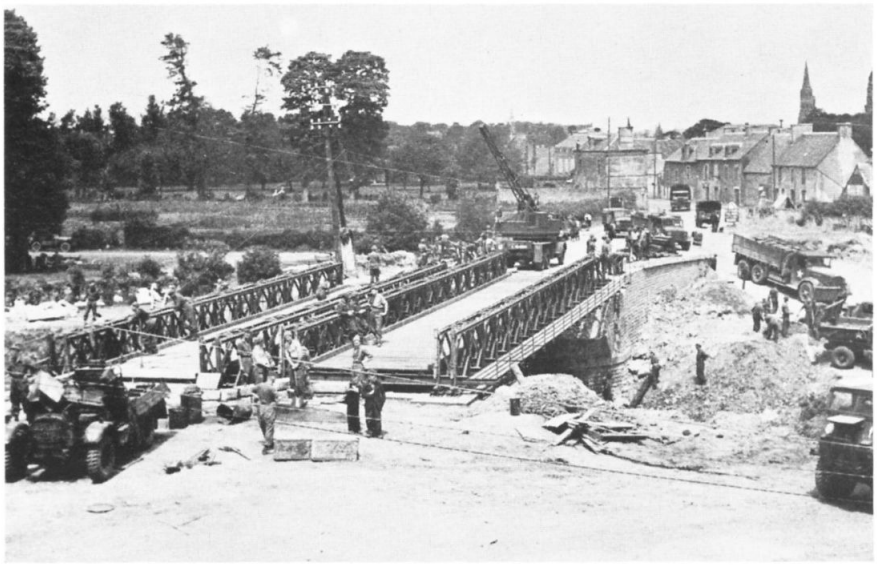
SANNERVILLE

One of the fortified villages in the German defence system of Caen. 'Carpet' bombed on July 18th 1944 by the RAF using 500 and 1,000lb bombs, the aiming point being the cross-roads which formed a double triangle. The attack was in preparation for the 'GOODWOOD' plan; the 'left hook' around Caen. Two thousand bombers and 2,000 fighter-bombers and fighters, 720 guns with a quarter of a million rounds bombarded the fortified villages.

Finally captured by infantry of British 3rd Division.

Right: Sannerville Chateau was in the middle of the area of attack, photographed here on 19th June 1944.

Far right: Repaired and restored, the Chateau stands silent in 1973.



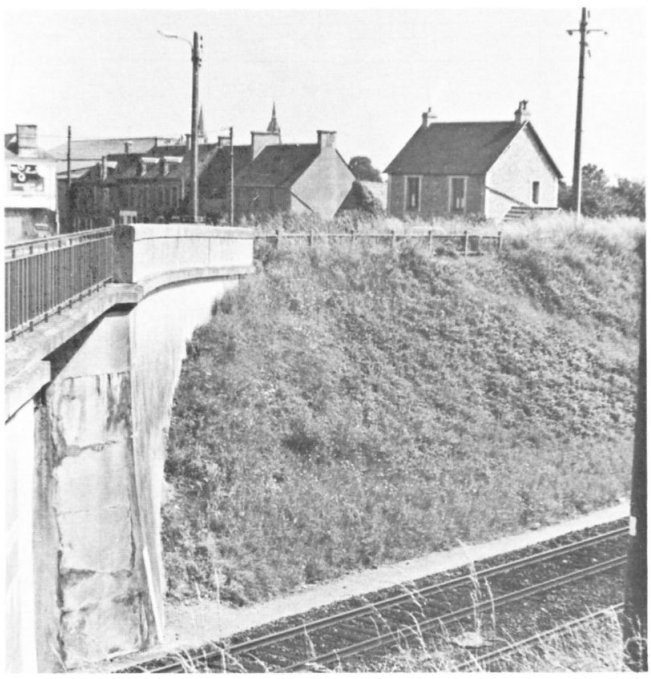
ST LOUP HORS

On D-Day the RAF bombed the road bridge at St Loup Hors over the railway line. The Germans made a temporary by-pass which the Allies subsequently used but it meant the railway line was blocked. Royal Engineers of 72nd Field Company erected a Bailey Bridge at the side of the demolished road bridge in four hours on 4th June.

Left: The Bailey bridge nears completion. The Mayor of Bayeux was the first person to drive across—in a jeep with Lt. Col. Lloyd.

Below: The present day road bridge has replaced the Bailey bridge and the railway runs underneath it. The remains of the approach to the old German by-pass can still be detected.

Below right: From the air the layout of the crossing can clearly be seen.



Caen has been captured. Soldiers meet with civilians enjoying their new-found liberty outside a co-operative shop, which although modernised now still trades on the same corner of rebuilt Caen. (IWM).

Left and below: St. Pierre Church in the centre of Caen. Now, one has to pay to park one's jeep at a meter — a rather different situation existed 29 years ago! (IWM).

CAEN

Right: On the 10th July 1944 a Sherman tank and an anti-tank gun keep watch on Caen streets. (IWM).

Below: One of the *After the Battle* team tries to match the war-time picture but the street had been rebuilt, making an exact comparison impossible.

REVIERS

Above and far right: Reviers was occupied by the Regina Rifles on D-Day. These photographs were taken on 12th June 1944 and our comparison photographs in June 1973. (IWM).

Above: During the heavy fighting around Rauray, German snipers used a platform in the trees opposite the Chateau de la Londe (right) to fire on the battalion of the Suffolk Regiment attacking it. They soon dislodged the snipers. (IWM).

Today: Part of the platform can still be seen, and is used by children to hang their swing. When the *After the Battle* researcher told them what had happened they immediately produced German cartridges they had found underneath the platform.

RAURAY

Tenacious fighting took place in this sector after a fresh Panzer Division had been thrown into the battle. Heavy fighting during the 'Epsom' battle by British infantry took place around the Chateau which fell to a 3rd Division battalion of the Suffolk Regiment.

LEBISEY

Holding point for 25 tanks of 1st Company and H.Q. of 21st Panzer Division commanded by Hauptmann Herr at 15.00 hrs. on D-Day. By dusk leading tanks led by Lieut.-Colonel Jim Eadie had advanced six miles from the beaches and were on the summit of the wooded hills around Lebisey. On D + 1 the Warwicks were ordered to take Lebisey Ridge and village but after heavy fighting the Germans beat them back with machine guns in the woods. The area was finally captured by the 185th Brigade of the 3rd British Division early on July 8th.

Top left and right: In 1944 this small bridge crossed the main road to Caen at Lebisey. The Sherman tank was pictured on 8th July. Today the bridge has been demolished to straighten the road—all that is left is part of the wall on the left. (IWM).

CULLY

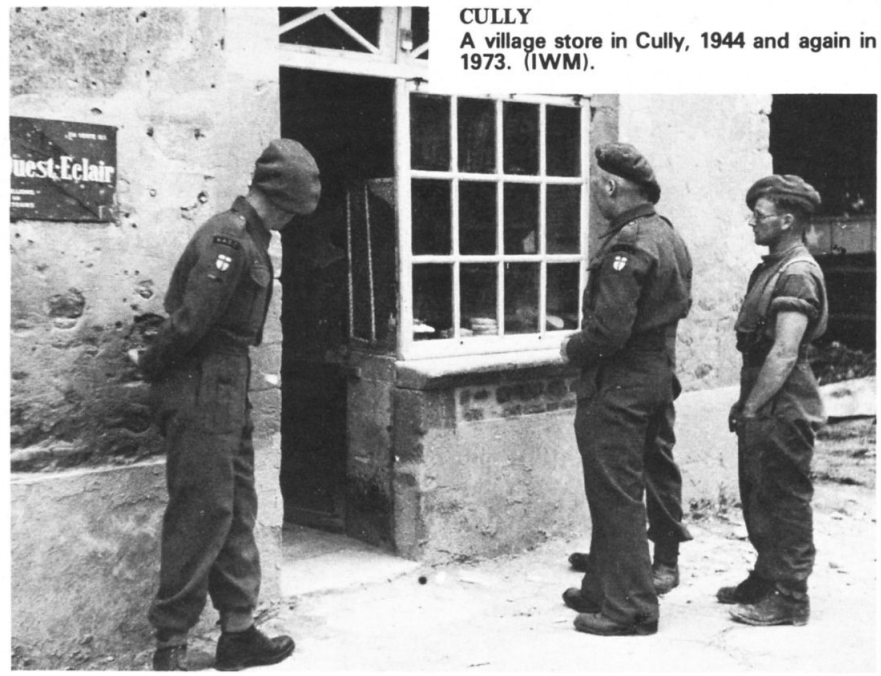
A village store in Cully, 1944 and again in 1973. (IWM).

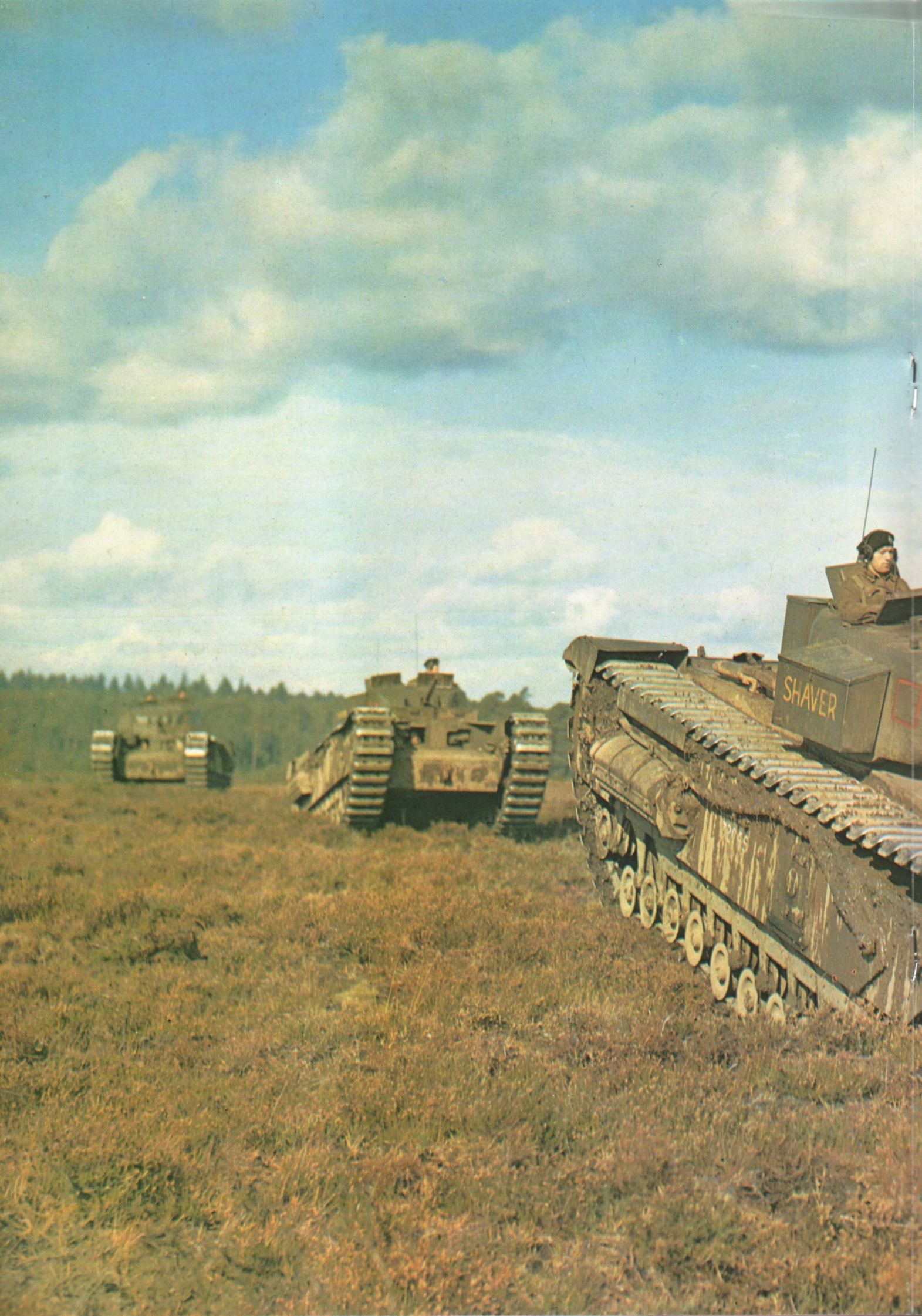
TILLY SUR SEULLES

Attacked on 14th June by 151 Brigade without effect. The 56th Infantry Brigade fought their way into the middle of the town on 11th June, finally capturing the town on the 19th.

Centre: Sergeant Midgeley took this picture of Royal Engineers mine clearing in the main road at Tilly sur Seulles on 19th June 1944. (IWM).

Above: In June 1973, we took this picture of one of our young researchers with a metal detector on the same spot. Happily he found nothing!




SHAVER

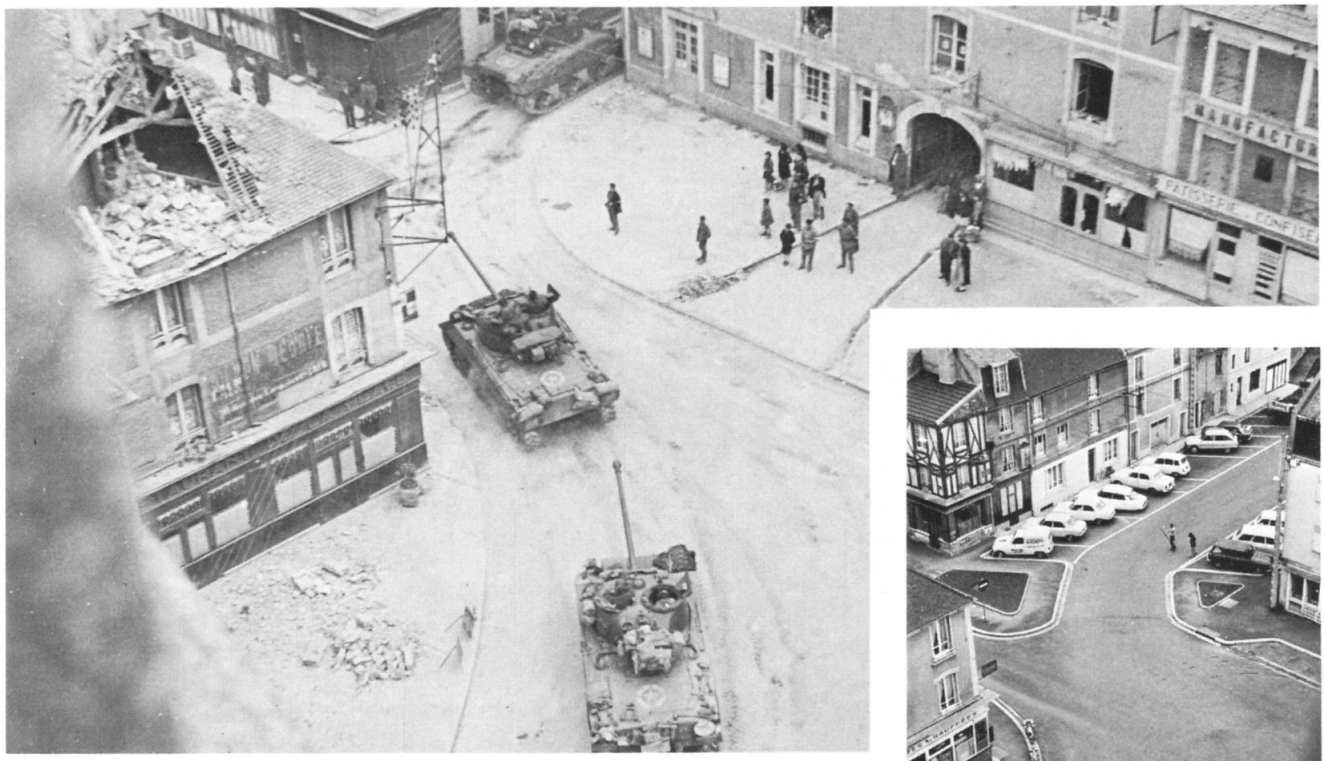
BRETTEVILLE L'ORGUEILLEUSE

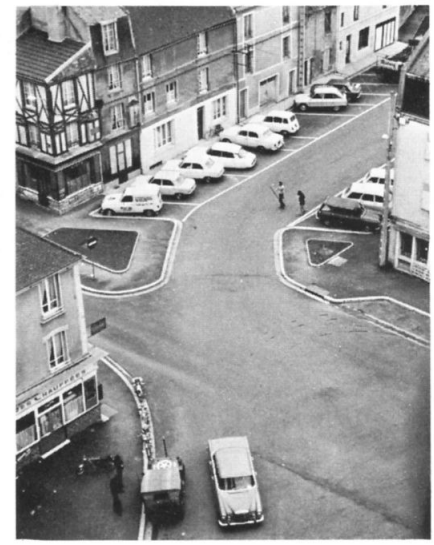
Lieutenant McCormick's troop of 'C' Squadron of the 6th Canadian Armoured Regiment (1st Hussars) had lost touch with their infantry on D-Day and advanced through Bretteville with no opposition. Later they withdrew.

The town was eventually captured by 7th Canadian Brigade on 7th June, but in a counterattack the 12th SS using Mark V Panthers and Mark IV tanks re-took the position.

These photographs were taken in Bretteville L'Orgueilleuse on 30th June. It had been the scene of bitter fighting and many houses were damaged. British troops are seen examining a Panther tank knocked out opposite the church, which has lost part of its steeple. (IWM).

Left and below: At the village pump troops help a farmer draw water. One of our researchers is seen at the site of the pump, since removed, in 1973.

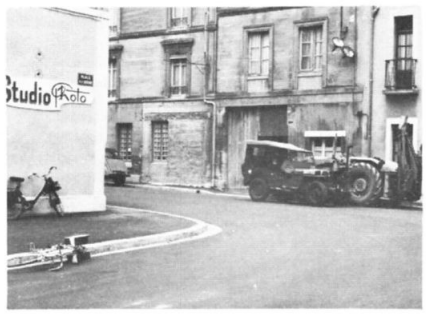




LA DELIVERANDE

The Cure of the twin spired church allowed us to climb to the top of one spire, past the bell, approximately 6ft. across, to match this well known photograph. Had it rung as we passed, we would have been shaken off the rickety stairs. The narrow road has been widened and cars parked where the Shermans once lumbered by. (IWM).

These pictures were taken on D+2 as tanks were passing through the town towards Caen. (IWM).



CRISTOT

Attacked on 11th June by 4th/7th Dragoon Guards losing nine tanks in the Cristot orchards. Finally captured from the 12th SS Panzer Division by the 49th Division during the advance on Tilly-sur-Seulles. The village was damaged by heavy shelling. Many snipers were left behind by the Germans, but troops of the 49th Division were soon able to dislodge them. After Cristot was occupied the Germans shelled it.

Left and below: The badly damaged church at Cristot has been expertly repaired. The rear of the church has, however, been shortened and the ruined end remains. (IWM).

ISIGNY

Captured on 9th June by the American 29th Division after heavy bombing on June 8th in which 60% of the town was destroyed.

After the Battle's **editor poses as the long forgotten Military Policeman who directed traffic on this spot 29 years ago. (IWM).**

OMAHA BEACH

The well-known picture (top) was taken at St. Laurent, on Easy Red Sector of Omaha beach and shows GI's of the US 2nd Infantry Division in front of E-1 Draw. (IWM).

Our picture comparison, taken in June 1973, shows the same scene. From the air (above), the area has not changed from the day the troops landed.

DOUVRES RADAR STATION

At Douvres la Deliverande, 1000 yards west of the village, the Germans had constructed a two storey underground radar station defended by two strong points of reinforced concrete, together with five 50mm anti-tank guns, many 20mm and light automatic weapons in shelters. Road blocks barred approach by road and the whole position was surrounded by wire and mines forty yards deep.

It was attacked on 7th June and again on the 12th. On 17th June a force of AVRE tanks and flail tanks with Royal Marine Commandos advanced from the north-west corner of Douvres. Three lanes were driven through the minefield and after a stiff fight the garrison of five officers and 200 men surrendered.

Nothing is left today of the two steel radar towers. The tops of various emplacements can be seen but entrance has been sealed to the underground rooms. The whole area of the site west of the Douvres — Basly road is now a pasture.

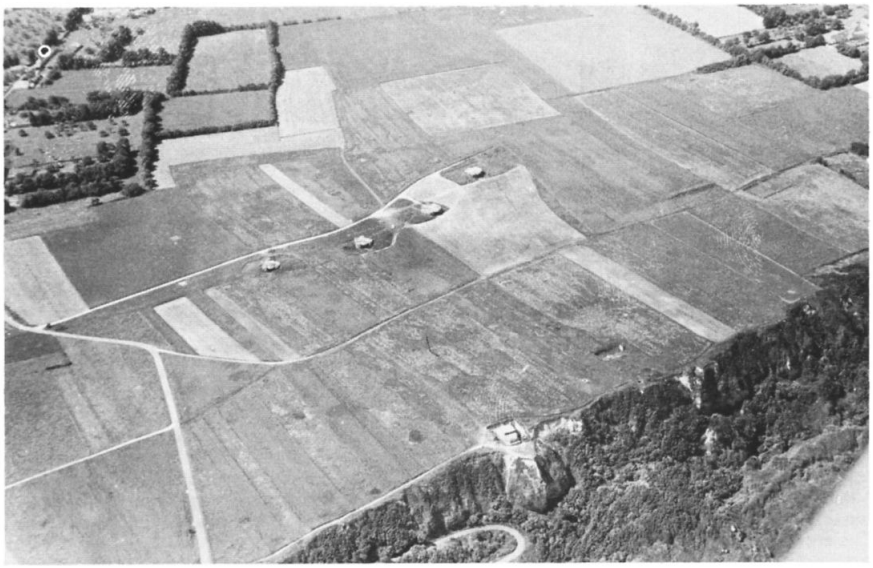
CARENTAN

One of the towns that had to be taken to link up with the US Forces who landed at Utah and Omaha. The American VII Corps was to take Carentan and although advanced elements reached the outskirts on June 9th, was not captured until early on 12th June. They found that the Germans had used up every scrap of ammunition. The 17th SS Panzer Grenadier Division counter attacked on 13th but the town was firmly held.

Carentan railway station in 1944 and again in 1973. (IWM).

After the Battle's **editor and his son point out the position of the sign in Carentan those GI's were so pleased to see in 1944. The two cement holes for the posts, place the position of the signpost exactly. (IWM).**

Now a modern street in Carentan, the Boulangerie on the right is still in business—the railway crossing still open! (IWM).



Centre: The layout of the four-gun battery can clearly be seen from this 1973 aerial photograph with the aiming post on the edge of the cliff.

LONGUES

Construction of the German Naval Battery on the 200ft cliffs at Longues-sur-Mer was begun in September 1943. It held four 152mm guns in concrete casemates. On the cliff edge was the two storey aiming post (the ground floor for the commander, the floor above ground for the instruments) but in June 1944 the view from the aiming aperture was blocked as the earth from the construction had not been cleared away. The battery also had searchlights, anti-aircraft guns and beach defences. The Allied air force dropped 1,500 bombs on the area, but this did not prevent it being the only battery to return the fire of the attacking ships on 6th June. It was bombed between 3.15 a.m. and 5.00 a.m. and at 5.30 the British cruiser *HMS Ajax* opened fire. Just before 6.00 the battery was in action firing on the headquarters ship *Bulolo*. This was kept up for 20 minutes and started again after a short break forcing the *Bulolo* to move seaward. Later *HMS Argonaut* joined *Ajax* and the battery was finally silenced by 8.45 a.m. One hundred and seventy-nine shells had been fired from the cruisers and two of the four guns received direct hits.

Today the battery is one of the best preserved of all the Atlantic Wall defences and still contains the four artillery pieces on their turntables. One gun was entirely destroyed by the direct hit but parts still remain. It is possible to see the large area of the Seine bay covered by the guns from the aiming post on the cliff.

Far left: The view which was blocked in 1944 of the Seine Bay from the aiming post with Arromanche harbour in the distance.
Left: General view of the battery.

Top: The view in 1973 from the dunes to the defended crossroads.
Above: The road over the culvert, cracked where the tank lies buried.

GRAYE SUR MER

Graye-sur-Mer was in Mike sector of Juno beach. Defences on this sector were formidable with an extensive amount of barbed wire and mines. The proposed exit from the beach ran through marshy ground which had been flooded by damming the stream which flowed through it. The exit road crossed the stream at a small culvert which had been heavily cratered forming a 63ft gap. A large tank trap, 16 ft wide and 9 ft deep, had been dug in the centre of the exit.

When the 26th Assault Squadron touched down, DD tanks (swimming tanks) were first on the beach together with the assaulting infantry. Their flail tanks started mine clearance operations up to the two exits, the main one and another 900 yards west of Courseulles. The latter soon accounted for one tank, having its track blown off in the minefield. Two others were damaged, blocking the entrance. The remaining tanks therefore concentrated on the main exit. An 8 ft fascine (bundle of logs) was dropped into the tank trap. Tanks then crossed the gap and worked their way up the main track avoiding waterlogged craters on the way. On the back of the dunes the tanks came under fire from mortars and machine guns from the cross-roads ahead on the main coast road. Not realising the size of the culvert crater Captain Hewitt ordered up a fascine tank to fill it. The driver, George Dunn, eased the tank forward on to what he thought was a patch of weeds as wind-blown sand covered the water in the crater. The front of the tank dipped and then he saw water through the weeds and started to slide. He stopped the tracks but the tank fell, the daylight through the vizor was cut off and the vehicle stopped. Water poured on top of him but somebody pulled him out and laid him on the turret which was only just above the water. The crew of six managed to get out but three were severely wounded by mortar fire before they could reach the cover of the dunes. The surviving three were evacuated to the UK that afternoon.

The SBG bridges carried by the AVRE tanks were only thirty feet long. A bridge was laid to rest on the tank and more fascines dumped into the water ahead. Troops brought up logs from the beach and at 9.15, an hour and a quarter after the troops landed, the first tanks and infantry crossed the bridge and rushed the houses at the cross-roads from which machine guns and mortars had been firing all the time. Six tanks had crossed the bridge when it started to slide off the sunken AVRE. Traffic was then stopped whilst the bridge was secured. Four more tanks got across until a Sherman became bogged. This was towed out and more logs brought up.

The driver of the first self-propelled gun to cross the bridge misjudged the distance and bellied himself in such a way that the tracks turned on thin air. Three bulldozers tried to get him off but failed and two AVRE tanks had to be called up. During this time a horse and cart was obtained from a farmer and rubble brought up from ruined houses. Later on the crater and submerged tank were concreted over.

The action described above was on the main original exit to MIKE sector. The bridge, constructed over the Churchill AVRE tank by filling in with rubble and finally concreting over, was called Pont D'Avre. At one time a bogey of the tank could still be seen but now there is no outward sign of its presence. The road has cracked in a large square pinpointing the position which was confirmed by readings on a metal detector.

ST MERE EGLISE

On the western flank of the assault it was planned to drop 13,000 paratroops from the U.S. 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions. St. Mere Eglise is a small market town of grey stone houses which stands on the road south from Cherbourg and in the dropping zone. Alexandre Renaud was the mayor and proprietor of the chemist shop bordering the town square — the Place de L'Eglise.

On the evening of June 6th the sound of bombing was very close. Renaud, could feel the very ground shaking. It seemed to him that planes were attacking the batteries at St. Marcouf and St. Martin-de-Varreville, and both places were only a few miles away. He was quite worried about the town and its people. About all the inhabitants could do was to take shelter in garden trenches or cellars, for they could not leave their homes because of the curfew. Renaud herded his wife, Simone, and their three children to the passageway leading off the living-room. Its heavy timbers afforded good protection. It was about 1.10 a.m. when the family collected in the makeshift air-raid shelter. Renaud remembers the time (it was 12.10 a.m. to him), because just then there was a persistent, urgent knocking at the street door.

Renaud left his family in their living quarters and walked through his darkened chemist's shop, which looked out on the Place de L'Eglise. Even before he reached the door, he could see what the trouble was. Through the windows of his shop the square, with its edging of chestnut trees and its great Norman church, appeared brilliantly lit up. M. Hairon's villa across the square was on fire and blazing fiercely.

Renaud got the door open. The town's fire chief, resplendent in his polished, shoulder-length brass helmet, stood before him. "I think it was hit by a stray incendiary from one of the planes," the man said without any preamble, motioning towards the burning house. "The fire is spreading fast. Can you get the commandant to lift the curfew? We need as much help as we can get for the bucket brigade."

The mayor ran to the nearby German headquarters. He quickly explained the situation to the sergeant on duty, who, on his own authority, gave permission. At the same time the German called out the guard, to watch the volunteers when they assembled. Then Renaud went to the parish house and told Father Louis Roulland. The cure sent his sexton to the church to toll the bell, while he, Renaud and the others banged on doors, calling for the inhabitants to help. Above them the bell began to clang, booming out over the town. People started to appear, some in their nightwear, others half dressed, and soon more than one hundred men and women in two long lines were passing buckets of water from hand to hand. Surrounding them were about thirty German guards armed with rifles and Schmeissers.

The noise and confusion had intensified in

Above: US Troops capture the church at St. Mere Eglise in the square where the paratroopers landed the night before.
Right: A member of the *After the Battle* team 'captures' the church in 1973.

Renaud's absence. The flames were higher now. Showers of sparks had spread to the outbuildings and they were already starting to burn. The scene had a nightmarish quality. He stood almost rooted to the spot, seeing the flushed, excited faces of the firefighters, the overdressed, ponderous German guards with their rifles and machine-guns. And above the square the bell still tolled, adding its persistent clanging to the din. It was then they all heard the droning of the planes.

The sound came from the west — a steadily mounting roar, and with it the approaching racket of anti-aircraft fire as battery after battery across the peninsula picked up the formations. In the square of St. Mere-Eglise everybody looked up, transfixed, the burning house forgotten. Then the guns of the town began firing and the roaring was on top of them. The aircraft swept in, almost wing tip to wing tip, through a criss-crossing barrage of fire that hammered up from the ground. The planes' lights were on. They came in so low that people in the square instinctively ducked and Renaud remembers that the aeroplanes cast "great shadows on the ground and red lights seemed to be glowing inside them."

In wave after wave the formations flew over, the first planes of the biggest airborne operation ever attempted — 882 planes carrying thirteen thousand men, heading for six drop zones all within a few miles of St. Mere-Eglise. The troopers tumbled out of their planes, stick after stick. And as those destined for the zone outside the town drifted down, scores of them heard an incongruous sound over the clatter of battle: a church bell tolling in the night. For many it was the last sound they ever heard. Caught by a heavy wind, a number of soldiers floated down towards the inferno of the Place de l'Eglise — and the guns of the German guards that a twist of fate had placed there. Lieutenant Charles Santarsiero of the 101st's 506th Regiment was standing in the door of his plane as it passed over St. Mere-Eglise. "We were about four hundred feet up," he remembers, "and I could see fires burning and Krauts running about. There seemed to be total confusion on the ground. All hell broken loose. Flak and small-arms fire was coming up and those poor guys were caught right in the middle of it."

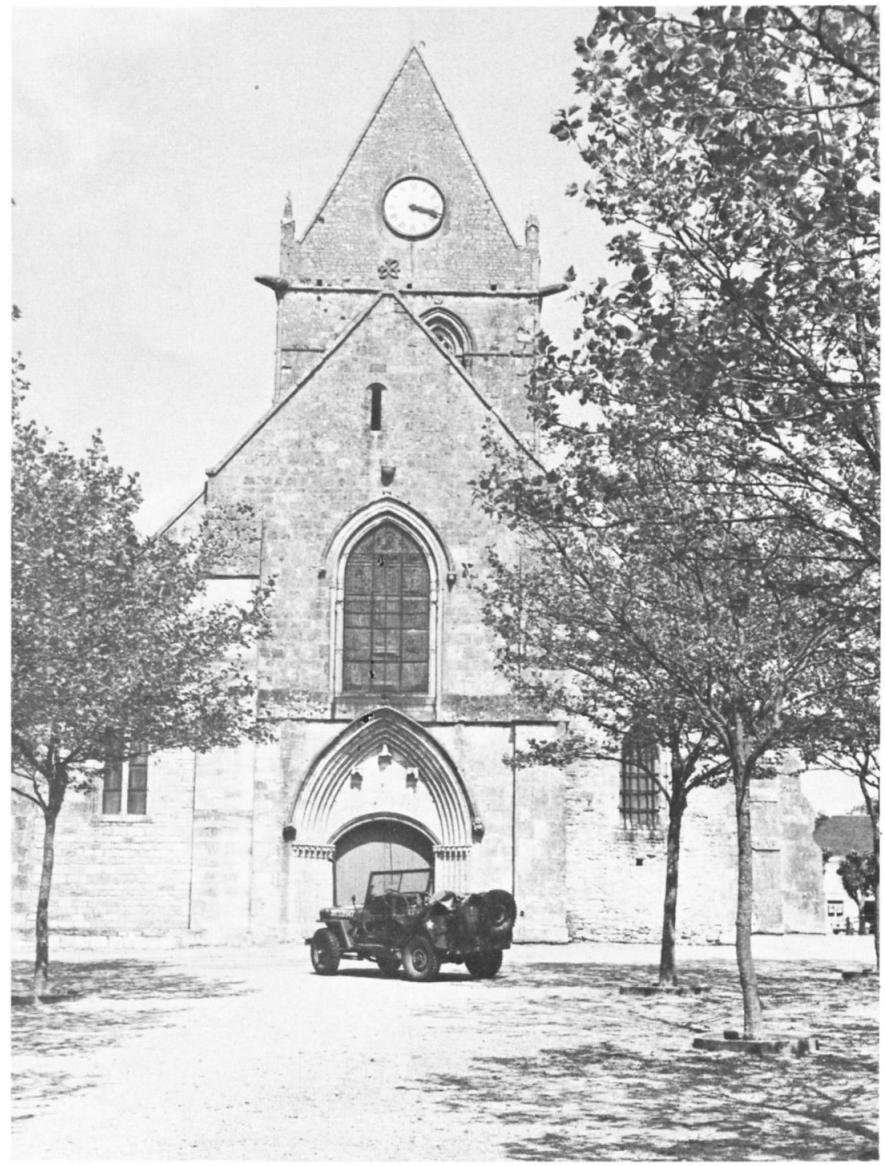
Almost as soon as he left his plane, Private John Steele of the 82nd's 505th Regiment saw that instead of landing in a lighted drop zone he was heading for the centre of a town that seemed to be on fire. Then he saw German soldiers and French civilians running frantically about. Most of them, it seemed to Steele, were looking up at him. The next moment he was hit by something that felt "like the bite of a sharp knife." A bullet had smashed into his foot. Then Steele saw something that alarmed him even more. Swinging in his harness unable to veer away from the town, he dangled helplessly as his chute carried him straight towards the church steeple at the end of the square.

Above Steele, P.F.C. Ernest Blanchard heard the church bell ringing and saw the maelstrom of fire coming up all around him. The next minute he watched horrified as a man floating down almost beside him "exploded and completely disintegrated before my eyes," presumably a victim of the explosives he was carrying.

Blanchard began desperately to swing on his risers, trying to veer away from the mob in the square below. But it was too late. He landed with a crash in one of the trees. Around him men were being machine-gunned to death. There were shouts, yells screams and moans — sounds that Blanchard will never forget. Frantically, as the machine-gunning came closer, Blanchard sawed at his harness. Then he dropped out of the tree and ran in panic, unaware that he had also sawed off the top of his thumb.

It must have seemed to the Germans that St. Mere-Eglise was being smothered by paratroop assault, and certainly the towns people in the square thought that they were at the centre of a major battle. Actually very few Americans — perhaps thirty — dropped into the town, and no more than twenty came

After the Battle's **jeep below the church tower on which Private Steele hung on his parachute.**



down in and about the square. But they were enough to cause the German garrison of slightly less than one hundred men to panic. Reinforcements rushed to the square, which seemed to be the focal point of the attack, and there some Germans, coming suddenly upon the bloody, burning scene, seemed to Renaud to lose all control.

About fifteen yards from where the mayor stood in the square a paratrooper plunged into a tree and almost immediately, as he tried frantically to get out of his harness, he was spotted. As Renaud watched, "about half a dozen Germans emptied the magazines of their sub-machine guns into him and the boy hung there with his eyes open, as though looking down at his own bullet holes."

Caught up in the slaughter all around them, the people in the square were now oblivious to the mighty airborne armada that was still droning ceaselessly overhead. Thousands of men were jumping for the 82nd's drop zones north-west of the town, and the 101st's zones east and slightly west, between St. Mere-Eglise and the Utah invasion area. But every now and then, because the drop was so widely scattered, stray paratroopers from almost every regiment drifted into the holocaust of the little town. One or two of these men, loaded down with ammunition, grenades and plastic explosives, actually fell into the burning house. There were brief screams and then a fusillade of shots and explosions as the ammunition went up.

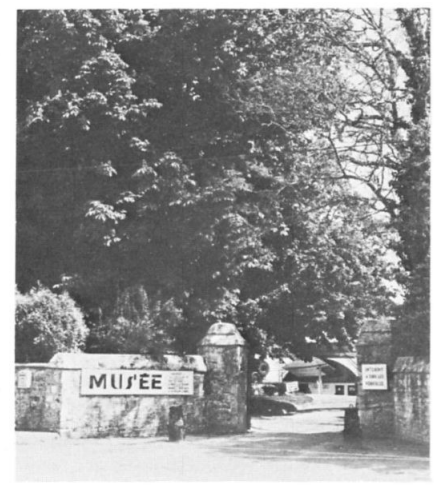
In all this horror and confusion one man tenaciously and precariously clung to life. Private Steele, his parachute draped over the steeple of the church, hung just under the eaves. He heard the shouts and the screams. He saw Germans and Americans firing at each other in the square and the streets. And, almost paralysed by terror, he saw winking red flashes of machine-guns as streams of stray bullets shot past and over him. Steele had tried to cut himself down, but his knife had some how slipped out of his hand and dropped to the square below. Steele then decided that his only hope lay in playing dead. On the roof, only a few yards away from him, German machine-gunners fired at everything in sight, but not at Steele. He hung so realistically "dead" in his harness that Lieutenant Willard Young of the 82nd, who passed by during the height of the fighting, still remembers "the dead man hanging from the steeple." In all, Steele dangled there for more than two hours before being cut down and taken captive by the Germans. Shocked and in pain from his shattered foot, he has absolutely no recollection of the tolling of the bell only a few feet from his head.

It is not possible to determine exactly how many were killed and wounded in the square, because sporadic fighting continued all over the town until the actual attack which resulted in its capture. But the best estimates put casualties at about twelve killed, wounded and missing. Most of these men were from F Company, 2nd Battalion, 505th Regiment, and there is a pathetic little note in their official records which reads: "2nd Lt. Cadish and the following enlisted men dropped in the town and were killed almost instantly: Shearer, Blankenship, Bryant, Van Holsbeck and Tlapa." Private John Steele saw two men fall into the burning house, and one of those he believes was Private White of his own mortar squad who dropped behind him.

Below: The square in June 1973 looking from the pump to the site of M. Hairon's burning villa. Villagers tried to put the fire out on the night of 6th June with water passed in a chain of buckets.

The Square at St. Mere Eglise is the same today as it was on the night of the landing. M. Renaud's chemist shop can be seen and the site of M. Hairon s burning villa. The tree in which P.F.C. Blanchard hung on his parachute is by the entrance to the Airborne Museum. This contains one of the original Waco CG-4A Hadrian gliders now restored. Railings bordering the square show marks of machine gun bullets. The town was finally captured at 4.30 a.m.

The tree on the edge of the square (now the entrance to the museum) where PFC Blanchard landed by parachute on the night of 6th June 1944.



Pointe du Hoe

Above: Colonel Rudder's command post for the 2nd Ranger Battalion in a niche, at the edge of the cliff. (IWM).

Right: The same spot, overgrown, in June 1973.

Before the war Pointe du Hoe cliffs were a local beauty spot, but the Germans, by 1944, had converted the area into what was reputed to be the most dangerous battery overlooking the American beach. The six 155mm guns were able to cover both Omaha and Utah beaches and it was necessary to plan to destroy them. One gun was demolished in a massive air attack on April 15th, 1944. Unknown to the Allies, the Germans removed the guns after this raid and installed them in a camouflaged site covering the mouth of the Vire river. This was unknown at the time and further attacks were carried out on May 22nd and June 4th, 5th and 6th. At dawn on the 6th June the battleship *USS Texas* shelled the cliffs.

Cornelius Ryan gives a graphic description of the landing and assault by U.S. Rangers in his book "The Longest Day".

Rockets trailing ropes shot up towards the hundred-foot-high cliff at Pointe du Hoe. Between Utah and Omaha beaches the third American seaborne attack was going in. Small-arms fire poured down on Lieutenant-Colonel James E. Rudder's three Ranger companies as they began the assault to silence the massive coastal batteries which intelligence said menaced the American beaches on either side. The nine LCAs carrying the 225 men of the 2nd Ranger Battalion clustered along the little strip of beach beneath the cliff overhang. It afforded some protection from the machine-gun fire and from the grenades that the Germans were now rolling down on them—but not much. Offshore the British destroyer *Talybont* and the U.S. destroyer *Satterlee* lobbed in shell after shell on to the cliff top.

Rudder's Rangers were supposed to touch down at the base of the cliff at H-Hour. But the lead boat had strayed and led the little flotilla straight towards Pointe de la Percee, three miles east. Rudder had spotted the mistake, but by the time he got the assault craft back on course precious time had been lost. The delay would cost him his five-hundred-man support force—the rest of the 2nd Rangers and Lieutenant-Colonel Max Schneider's 5th Ranger Battalion. The plan had been for Rudder to fire flares as soon as his men had scaled the cliff, as a signal for the other Rangers waiting in their boats some miles offshore to follow in. If no signal was received by 7 a.m. Colonel Schneider was to assume that the Pointe du Hoe assault had failed and head for Omaha Beach four miles

away. There, following in behind the 29th Division, his Rangers would swing west and drive for the Pointe to take the guns from the rear. It was now 7.10 a.m. No signal had been given, so Schneider's force was already heading for Omaha. Rudder and his 225 Rangers were on their own.

It was a wild, frenzied scene. Again and again the rockets roared, shooting the ropes and rope ladders with grapnels attached. Shells and forty-millimetre machine-guns raked the cliff top, shaking down great chunks of earth on the Rangers. Men spurted across the narrow, cratered beach trailing scaling ladders, ropes and hand rockets. Here and there at the cliff top Germans bobbed up, throwing down "potato masher" hand grenades or firing Schmeissers. Somehow the Rangers dodged from cover to cover, unloaded their boats and fired up the cliff—all at the same time. And off the Pointe, two DUKWS—amphibious vehicles—with tall, extending ladders (borrowed for the occasion from the London Fire Brigade) tried to manoeuvre closer in. From the tops of the ladders Rangers blasted the headlands with Browning automatic rifles and Tommy guns.

The assault was furious. Some men didn't wait for the ropes to catch. Weapons slung over their shoulders, they cut handholds with their knives and started up the nine-storey-high cliff like flies. Some of the grapnels now began to catch and men swarmed up the ropes. Then there were wild yells as the Germans cut the ropes and Rangers hurtled back down the cliff. P.F.C. Harry Robert's rope was cut twice. On his third try he finally got to a cratered niche just under the edge of the cliff. Sergeant Bill "L-Rod" Petty tried going up hand over hand on a plain rope but, although he was an expert free climber, the rope was so wet and muddy he couldn't make it. Then Petty tried a ladder, got thirty feet up and slid back when it was cut. He started back up again. Sergeant Herman Stein climbing another ladder was almost pushed off the cliff face when he accidentally inflated his Mae West. He "struggled for an eternity" with the life preserver but there were men ahead and behind him on the ladder. Somehow Stein kept on going.

Now men were scrambling up a score of ropes that twisted and snaked down from the top of the cliff. Suddenly Sergeant Petty, on his way up for the third time, was peppered by chunks of earth flying out all around him. The Germans were leaning out over the edge of the cliff, machine-gunning the Rangers as they climbed. The Germans fought desperately, despite the fire that was still raining on them from the Rangers on the fire ladders and from the destroyers offshore. Petty saw the climber next to him stiffen and swing out from the cliff. Stein saw him too. So did twenty-year-old P.F.C. Carl Bombardier. As they watched, horrified, the man slid down the rope and fell, bouncing from ledges and rock outcroppings, and it seemed to Petty "a lifetime before his body hit the beach". Petty froze on the rope. He could not make his hand move up to the next rung. He remembers saying to himself, "This is just too hard to climb." But the German machine guns got him going again. As they began to spray the cliff dangerously near him, Petty "unfroze real fast". Desperately he hauled himself up the last few yards.

Everywhere men were throwing themselves over the top and into shell holes. To Sergeant Regis McCloskey, who had successfully brought his half-sinking ammunition boat into the beach, the high plateau of Pointe du Hoe presented a weird, incredible sight. The ground was so pitted by shells and bombs from the pre-H-Hour naval and air bombardment that it looked like "the craters of the moon". There was an eerie silence now as men pulled themselves up and into the protective craters. The fire had stopped for the moment, there was not a German to be seen, and everywhere men looked the yawning craters stretched back towards the mainland—a violent, terrible no-man's land.

Pointe du Hoe today, showing the six gun emplacements. Colonel Rudder's command post is in the centre of the picture. Pre-war, the cliffs were vertical, but the bombing and shelling has battered and crumbled them.

Colonel Rudder had already established his first command post, a niche in the edge of the cliff. From it his signals officer, Lieutenant James Eikner, sent out the message "Praise the Lord." It meant "All men up cliff." But that was not quite true. At the base of the cliff the Rangers' medical officer, a pediatrician in private practice, was tending the dead and dying on the beach—perhaps twenty-five men. Minute by minute the valiant Ranger force was being chipped away. By the end of the day there would only be ninety of the original 225 still able to bear arms. Worse, it had been a heroic and futile effort—to silence guns which were not there.

Some two hours later a Ranger patrol found a deserted five-gun battery in a camouflaged position more than a mile inland. Stacks of shells surrounded each gun and they were ready to fire, but the Rangers could find no evidence that they had ever been manned. These were the guns from the Pointe du Hoe emplacements.

The guns were destroyed with explosives.

The Rangers had to fight off several attacks during the day—some reinforcements from Omaha beach arrived in the evening. The following morning a further 30 men arrived but it was not until June 8th when two Sherman tanks arrived with more Rangers that the position was secured.

Today Pointe du Hoe has been kept as a memorial and the ground is still heavily pitted with craters. The full extent of the fortress can still be seen and it is possible to climb down to the beach where the Rangers landed: The famous photograph of Colonel Rudder's Command Post with the US flag, can be found 300 yards along the cliff to the east.

Utah beach

Captain George Mabry, U.S. 8th Infantry, landed at Utah Beach.

At 4.55, the landing craft were assembled and started their long run—an hour and a half—towards the beach. They were led by two 173-foot patrol craft, and one smaller boat specially fitted with radar.

At 5.40, Mabry saw the muzzle flashes and the smoke, and then the splitting crash of the first salvoes of the bombardment came across the water like a wall of sound. From then, for forty-seven minutes, there was never a pause in the roar of naval gunfire.

The boats crept in beyond the warships, underneath the shells. Before six o'clock, Mabry could see the shore; or if not the shore, the smoke and the dust of shell-bursts which spouted from it. He peered at the coast-line he knew so well from its maps and photographs, but so far there were no landmarks to be seen.

Landing craft armed with 4.7-inch guns were closing in on either side, shooting at close range against the dunes. Seventeen tank landing craft fitted with rocket launchers fired salvoes of fifty-pound rockets with a noise which was fearsome even above the gunfire. Mabry could see the sandy beach, heaving, drenched with explosives. But smoke and dust and fine sand were drifting out to sea, and he only caught glimpses of the outline of the dunes behind the beach. There should have been a windmill, and a small patch of dunes called Les Dunes de Varreville which were higher than the rest. But he could not identify anything. The first wave of landing craft were just ahead of him, steering for the shore in line abreast, leaving white wakes in the water. Four hundred yards out, two of them fired black smoke signals into the sky: the sign to the navy that the moment of climax had come. Instantly, the barrage lifted; the beach lay still. The landing craft drove on to the narrow line of white where small waves broke quietly on the shore. To within a minute, the time was H-Hour; 6.30 in the morning.

The beach was about three hundred yards across, and on the other side of it, lurking in their dugouts in the dunes, were some hundreds of men of the German Army.

Mabry went down the ramp and felt the sand under his boots in about four feet of water. It was most of a hundred yards to the edge of the sea. Perhaps it took him two minutes to reach the shallow water where he could pick up his feet and splash on to the hard wet sand.

Once on the beach, he only paused to see his companions close behind him with expressions of incredulous relief on their faces, and then he set off for the dune line.

On the seaward face of the dunes there was a concrete seawall about four feet high, and there in the dry sand above the tidemark, among such familiar seaside holiday things as shells and seaweed and corks washed up from fishing nets, the leading two companies were pausing; and there Mabry learned why he had not seen any of his landmarks. So far the battalion's landing had been easy; but it had

Left: GI's of the 9th Infantry shelter behind the sea wall.

Above: The beach photographed at 6.30 a.m. June 1973. (IWM).

landed in the wrong place. General Roosevelt, who perhaps knew the terrain even better than Mabry, had already been up on the dunes to find out where they were, and had discovered they were over a mile too far south.

But nobody on the beach was caring how the mistake had been made. The urgent question was what should be done about it: write off the first waves of troops, and allow the following forces to land in the right place, or change the assault plans and bring in the whole force to the wrong place. The mistake might have led to totally disastrous confusion; but the situation was saved by the presence of General Roosevelt. He not only had the quickness of mind to make the decision at once; he also had the authority to enforce it. In the lull so luckily caused by the weakness of the German troops, he consulted the two battalion commanders and for better or worse, he signalled the navy to send in all the succeeding waves to the place where the first had landed.

Mabry went through a gap in the seawall which led to a track. Here there was a dead German, the first he had seen; through the gap, on the left, the remains of a barbed-wire fence.

He went on for a long way, scrambling up the hillocks of sand and sliding down them, before he noticed landmines. As soon as he saw one, he saw dozens, lying about on the surface, uncovered perhaps by the bombing. He reckoned they must have been duds; but he was certainly in a minefield, where there might be others, still covered and still alive. He wondered whether to go back or go on, and went on, hurrying because he thought he was left behind.

What brought him up in the end was a pillbox, from which a machine gun fired at him. By then he was through the dunes, in a flat meadow behind them. He took cover in a convenient drainage ditch and tried to crawl along it; but he was shot at again whenever he showed his head.

Mabry had rather lost count of time by then. Probably it was after nine o'clock. At all events, the engineers, who landed in the third wave, must by then have blown a new gap in the seawall and bulldozed a track through the dunes; because Mabry's rather imperious demand for a tank was soon answered. One of the twenty-eight amphibious tanks which had reached the shore came roaring along at the back of the dunes, fired four shots at the pillbox and roared away again, leaving him and his followers to collect the two dozen Germans who had come out waving the white flag which the defending forces seemed always to find at short notice.

With them out of the way, Mabry went on a little further; and after a while he was rewarded by the irresistible sight of a causeway across the floods which seemed to be intact and totally undefended. This was Exit 1, the most southerly of all the causeways, the one which led to Pouppeville, and thence to Sainte-Marie-du-Mont. There was a little bridge in the middle of it; and while he was crawling towards the bridge through the flat wet meadows he heard shooting from Pouppeville, and rightly guessed that there could not possibly be any Americans there unless they were parachutists. He hoisted the small orange flag which he had been given to use in that very situation: the flag which Colonel Ewell's men saw and recognised when they finished their battle in the village school.

The parachutists came down the causeway, and Mabry and his men went up it. An airborne lieutenant greeted Mabry as if he had not seen an American for years, and told him that General Taylor was there and would certainly be glad to see him.

Utah beach at la Madeleine where the misdirected assault took place is completely unchanged. The sea wall has collapsed in places but the section shown in the photograph where Captain George Mabry's troops dug in still remains. A search in front of this wall with a metal detector revealed a U.S. water bottle, jerrycan dated 1943 and an ammunition box. All were 2 feet below the surface and were most probably at the bottom of the trench when filled in. A small local museum has been made in one of the German strongpoints and several guns remain together with a DUKW, landing craft, carrier, Sherman tank and various field guns. Visitors are shown a film, model maps and working models of the landings. The Utah beaches were used up to November 1944 and handled 826,000 troops, 220,000 vehicles and 700,000 tons of supplies.

Below: DUKW and Sherman tanks on the sand dunes outside the Utah beach museum.

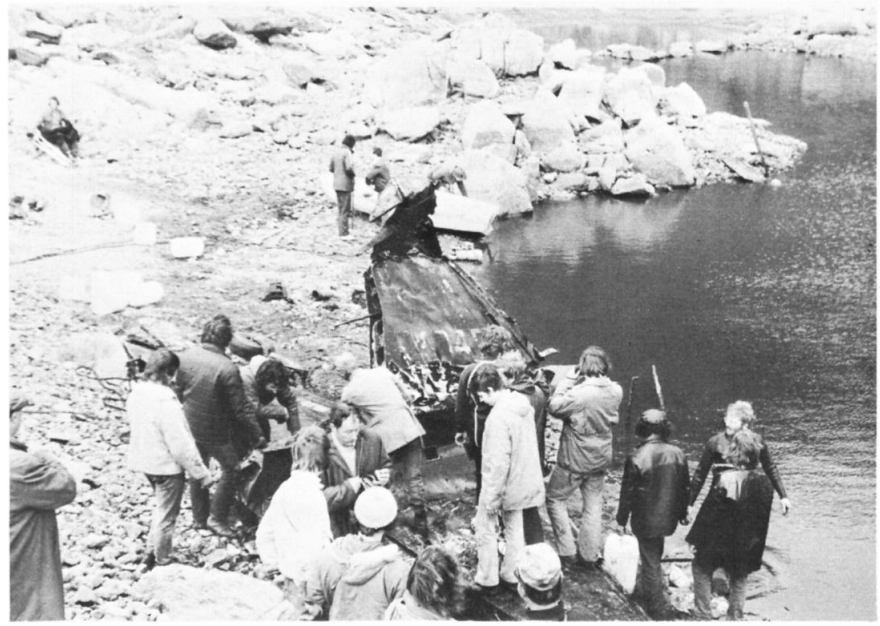
Above: Vehicles roll on past St. Marie-du-Mont towards Utah Beach during the 'Return to Normandy' 30th Anniversary Tour.

AFTER THE BATTLE

WRECK RECOVERY

Wreck Investigation in the Welsh mountains

by D. J. SMITH



Above: The C-47 tail-plane after being in the Ilyn Dulyn Lake for 29 years. The number is clearly visible on the fin. (D. J. Smith).
Below: C-47 Skytrain (Dakota) of the USAAF. (via R. A. Freeman).

On a foggy November day in 1944 a USAAF C-47B Skytrain, better known by its RAF name of Dakota, on a routine mail and cargo flight from Le Bourget, Paris to Burtonwood Air Depot in Lancashire, diverted to Valley, Anglesey. Unaccountably, the aircraft was about 15 miles south of track when it flew into a vertical cliff face in Snowdonia at an altitude of 2,200 feet. Most of the wreckage fell into the murky depths of Llyn Dulyn (the Black Lake) but a wing and engine remained jammed, presumably by the propellor blades, in a crack in the rock about 300 feet above the water. The RAF Valley Mountain Rescue Team dislodged some of this wreckage in 1949 to prevent local children from attempting to reach it, but to this day the olive drab camouflaged centre-section still hangs on the cliff.

The precise identity of this aircraft had long eluded the researches of the Warplane Wreck Investigation Group until we were approached by members of the West Bromwich Underwater Exploration Club who had found the aircraft's complete tail-unit at a depth of 60 feet (the lake is about 160 feet deep) during an exploratory dive. As the serial number would be painted on the fin and would be essential for checking the US Air Force records, we were all keen to raise this relic so we joined forces on a weekend in October 1972 to attempt a recovery operation. The lake is used as a reservoir serving part of the North Wales coast so permission was obtained from the local Water Board before the dive.

Llyn Dulyn is accessible only by a 2½ miles long track, suitable only for Land Rovers, followed by a ½ mile walk over rough ground. Consequently two boats and heavy diving equipment had to be carried in relays to the lake. Having accomplished this, the first stage was the attachment of about 20 five-gallon plastic containers to the tail section. Compressed air was released into them and the wreckage was gradually lifted to the surface. This proved to be the whole tailplane, upside down with the ribs of the elevators attached. The only suitable beaching point was about 500 yards from the position of the tail so we had previously stretched a rope between the two points so we could pull the boats and tail hand-over-hand across the lake.

Once the tail was beached we discovered that the fin was bent over at the base but the serial number 348473 was plainly visible in yellow with the worn remains of the 27th Air Transport Group's yellow/black/yellow/black horizontal stripes on the tip. The tail-wheel leg and tyre which still rotated on its bearings, a cylinder-head and wheel chock were all recovered for good measure. The hydraulic fluid in the oleo was bled off and appeared to be in perfect condition with no sign of water contamination, despite its 28-year immersion; a tribute to the manufacturer.

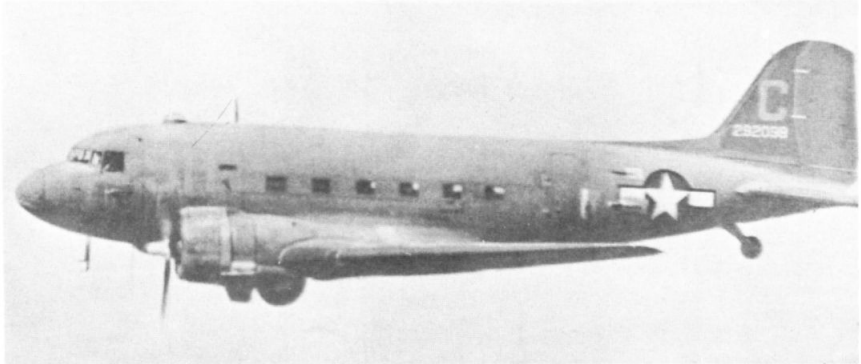
Now that we had established the C-47's identity we could trace the details of its last flight. A crew of four was on board consisting of pilot, co-pilot, engineer and radio-operator and the aircraft was operated by the 86th Transport Squadron/27th ATG, a unit of the 302nd Transport Wing.

The aircraft overflew Burtonwood because the weather conditions precluded an attempt at landing. The reported visibility was 100-200 yards. The last contact with the aircraft was a routine radio message after it had set course for Valley. Nothing more was heard and it was several days before the Valley Mountain Rescue Team located the crash site.

At the time of the accident, the aircraft was less than three months old, having been completed by Douglas at their Long Beach, California plant on 23rd August 1944 and delivered initially to the 9th Air Force on the 30th of that month. It was then ferried to Europe and re-assigned to the 8th Air Force. Even during this short period the serial number on the fin had been repainted in yellow but has now faded in places to reveal the red numbers of the original factory finish. According to the records no nickname was carried but "Sad Sack" insignia was painted on the nose, presumably an unofficial squadron badge.

Llyn Dulyn lies in a gloomy hollow and local legend has it that no birds ever fly over its dark waters. Whether this is true or not I cannot say, but it certainly has a forbidding atmosphere especially when the cliffs which surround it on three sides are partly hidden by mist. Four other aircraft crashed within half a mile of its shores. One of these is a Whitley V BD232 which disappeared on 25th September 1942 whilst on a night cross-country flight from No 24 Operational Training Unit, Honeybourne, Worcs. A search aircraft from the station sighted a wreck believed to be a Whitley on the 27th and a rescue team reached the spot a day later, finding no survivors from the crew of five. The engines, tailplane and centre fuselage with bomb-racks are the biggest pieces left but the whole area is littered with chunks of airframe. Above the cliffs are a few pieces of Anson N5371 which, it is believed, was not badly damaged on 23rd August 1943, but owing to the impossibility of salvage was pushed over the edge into the lake. The fact that there is not much left but geodetic fragments leads us to conclude that a Wellington, believed to be from No 30 OTU, Hixon, met the same fate. Further to the east is another Anson, MG804, which crashed on 12th July 1944, happily with the whole crew surviving. This must have been intact as on the day after the crash it was visible on the mountainside from the Conway Valley, four miles away, but it is now well scattered with the engines missing.

In fact, the whole of the ten mile backbone of the Carnedd Range is a graveyard of aircraft, having claimed about 24 including the above-mentioned examples both during and since the war. However, as a warning to potential wreck hunters, it must be mentioned that this area is remote, precipitous and prone to very bad weather.



AFTER THE BATTLE

UNITED KINGDOM

Cabinet War Rooms

One of the best kept secrets of World War II was the existence and location of the nerve centre of British planning and command — the underground Cabinet War Rooms.

First conceived during 1936 by the Committee of Imperial Defence, the Treasury provided £500 to start the project and two men were put in charge of the operation, Major Hollis of the Royal Marines and Lawrence Burgis a civil servant.

The site for the complex had to be central to Downing Street, the Houses of Parliament, Buckingham Palace and the Foreign Office and it was finally decided to use the cellars of the Board of Education building at Storey's Gate, now occupied by the Central Statistical Office. It was also convenient that the Ministry of Works (then Office of Works) had offices in the building as they would have to be aware of the construction. A senior official of the latter was taken into the confidence of Hollis and Burgis together with another official, George Rance.

George Rance proved to be enterprising and talented, in 'misappropriating' furniture and equipment for the secret construction from official stocks. He had special locks fitted to the doors to which he only held the key.

Secret maps and documents found their way into the cellars addressed simply "c/o Mr. Rance, Office of Works, Whitehall".

More money was forthcoming to provide steel doors and air ventilation which could be turned off in case of a gas attack. So as not to arouse suspicion the extracts to these ducts were routed to another building half a mile away. Wiring and piping was left exposed to facilitate speedy repairs.

The whole series of cellars covering six acres, totalling over 150 rooms including bedrooms, offices and operations rooms were shored up with girders and beams which gave it the appearance of a fortress. Over 600 people worked in this complex at the height of the war.

A fifteen foot thick concrete roof reinforced with old tram lines was constructed over the whole area designed to withstand the direct hit of a 500lb bomb. Part of this can still be seen in the base of the exterior wall to the present C.S.O. building in Great George Street. It even had its own water well dug and its own electricity plant. Pumps were installed in case of flooding from the nearby Thames and all door sills raised six inches. A canteen with a dining room for the General Staff was also

Top: The map room photographed today. The co-ordinating colonel sat at the far end of the table. (IWM).
Right: The sandbag pillbox which stood at the corner of Great George Street. One entrance to the underground rooms is just out of the picture to the left. (IWM).

provided below ground.

Various alarms and klaxons were fitted to give warnings of attacks and these increased in severity until the final klaxons would mean 'Imminent Ground Attack Overhead'. To prepare for such a situation, a pillbox was constructed at the corner of the building and a machine gun post was sited at the top of the entrance stairs. Below ground were stationed Royal Marines and fitted to the walls were rifle racks which were to be used to defend the fortress to the last man. Winston Churchill had a revolver and dagger in his desk drawer. The facilities were first activated during the Munich crisis of 1938.

Such a construction obviously took a long time to complete and work was still going on during the Battle of Britain.

On the roof of the building over the hollow square, scaffolding was erected to entangle the parachutes of aerial mines. The outside walls were sandbagged.

By 15th August 1945, the need for underground protection for the Cabinet was no longer needed. The rooms were abandoned and turned into storerooms — all except six which are preserved exactly as they were complete with operations maps, documents, maps, and communications as a memorial to the momentous role they played in the conduct of the war.

Above: One end of Winston Churchill's bedroom showing the desk from which his most famous broadcasts were made. The 1940 invasion map is on the right protected by the curtains. (IWM).

Above: An armed guard stands at the inside entrance to the Cabinet War Rooms. (IWM).

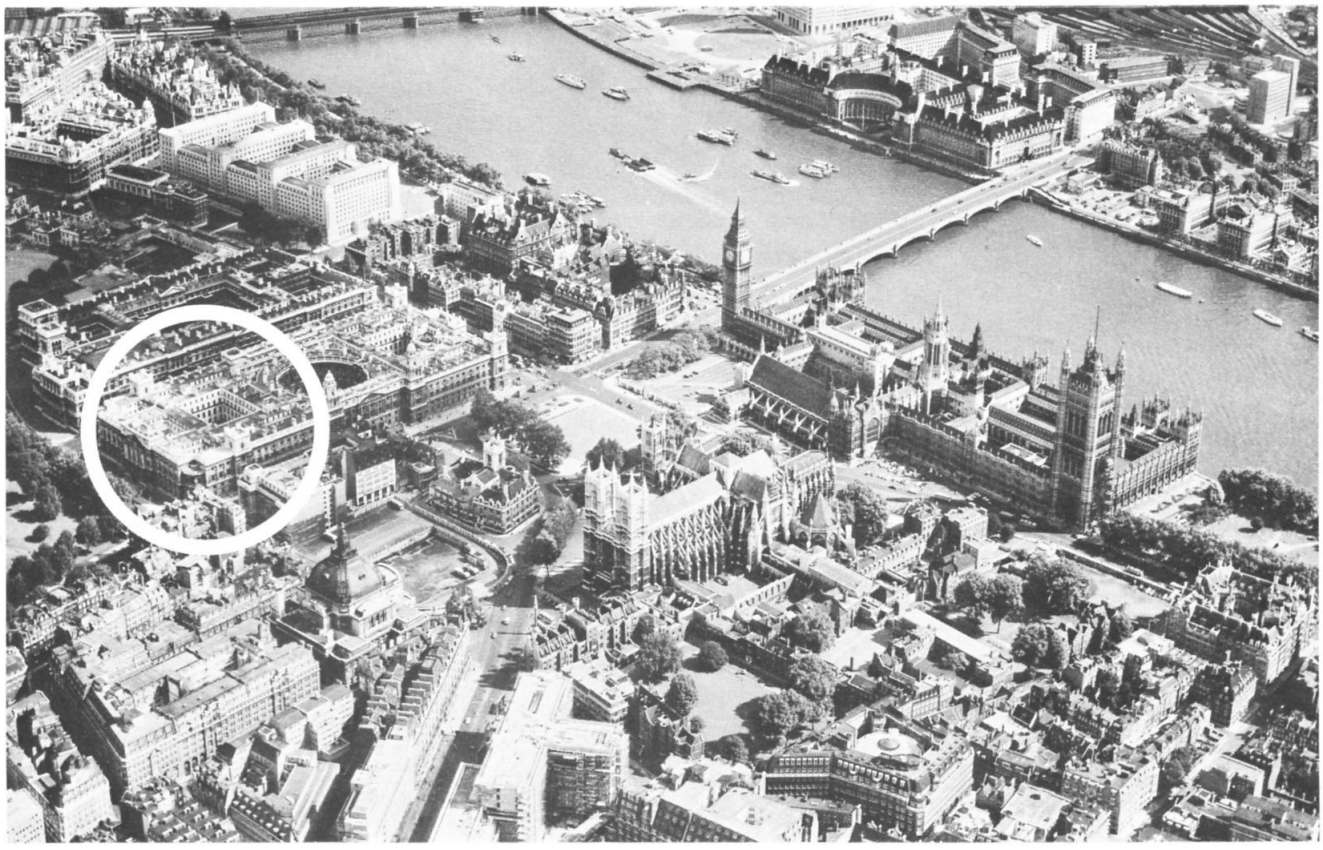
Below: The Office of Works building ringed left beneath which the Cabinet War Rooms were constructed. (Aerofilms Ltd.).

THE TELEPHONE

In a small room, just large enough for a desk and chair, the double doors disguised with a toilet 'Engaged/Vacant' lock, some of the most momentous telephone conversations were held between Winston Churchill and President Roosevelt.

The black telephone was an extension of the Prime Minister's instrument in Downing Street. This used the transatlantic radio-telephone link from the Central London Exchange, to the American Telephone and Telegraph Company building at 47 Walker Street, New York, and thence to the White House.

The scrambler device was the Bell Telephone A3 (codenamed X-Ray by the



In October 1945, the thick blast walls guarding the entrance were demolished. (Fox Photos).

British), which used band splitters with 3,840 possible combinations and was installed by U.S. Marines.

After the war it was discovered from captured German Reichspost reports, that the German post office had succeeded in intercepting and un-scrambling these conversations from a voice-cryptanalysis station on the Dutch coast. They had succeeded in setting up this equipment by September 1941 and monitored conversations between Roosevelt and Churchill, (the latter had great faith in the scrambler), until the A3 equipment was replaced by a more secure system in 1944. One of the last conversations intercepted early in 1944 gave the Germans further proof of the increasing military activity in Britain prior to the invasion.

The wall clock showed both London and Washington times, and a card was put next to the telephone with instructions for its use together with the phrase 'Speak directly into the microphone in a normal voice'.

When a telephone conversation took place, the corridor outside would be cleared so that there was no chance of the Prime Minister being overheard. We are told that Winston Churchill would never start a conversation without a new cigar which he would smoke throughout the conversation.

THE CABINET CONFERENCE ROOM

It was in this sound proofed room that meetings of the Cabinet and Chiefs of Staff were held. The baize covered table arranged in a hollow square, seated 25 people and still bears the faded place cards and blotting pads. In the centre of one side, in front of a map of the world, is a larger chair which was where Winston Churchill sat. On Churchill's left sat the Deputy Prime Minister, Clement Atlee, and on his right the Secretary of the Cabinet. A telephone, extension 657, in the corner still bears its original number.

THE MAP ROOM

This was the most important nerve centre of the whole operation. Down the centre of the room was a long table surmounted by a row of coloured telephones manned by a Principal Secretary from the Government together with officers of the three services, receiving information from their own particular headquarters. The telephones, which were white, green and black, were fitted with flashing lights instead of bells and some were fitted with scramblers, the control box for which was at the end of the desks. As information came in it was fed to a Colonel who sat at the end desk; it was then transferred to the numerous maps and charts on the surrounding walls. Every inch of the walls was covered with maps and visual information and various coloured pins denoted points of importance, divisions, ships, aircraft and other statistical information.

One map of the Atlantic convoys would get so perforated with pin holes that it had to be constantly replaced. It was here, in this room, that scores of the Battle of Britain were kept, the victories and defeats recorded.

Compressed air tubes for passing messages led to other offices in the complex.

On the Colonel's desk are two leather bound boxes, one black, titled 'The Cabinet & Committee of Imperial Defence'; the other red and labelled 'The King'. These boxes were delivered daily to the Prime Minister and Buckingham Palace.

The King was a frequent visitor and would check on the maps and statistics displayed in the Map Room.

It is interesting to note that Russian Information on the charts had to be estimated by the War Information Room, although they were ostensibly Allies.

WINSTON CHURCHILL'S BEDROOM

This room served both as a bedroom and office. At one end is a single bed with a portable washstand — piped water was not provided. At the opposite end is Churchill's mahogany desk complete with unused envelopes, pencil, candle and a buzzer to summon his butler, private secretary or Inspector Thompson, his private detective. It was from this desk that Churchill made his most famous broadcasts and an 'ON AIR' sign still remains. The first of these was made on May 19th 1940 — 'Arm yourselves and be men of valour'; the second on June 18th, 'This was their finest hour'; the third to the French on October 21st and then on February 9th 1941, 'Give us the tools, and we will finish the job'.

In the drawers were his famous instruction slips which would be stuck on all documents requiring attention — a yellow one 'Report progress in one week'; a blue one 'Report in three days'; and a pink one in bold type 'ACTION THIS DAY'.

On the walls remain maps — one perhaps the most secret map — which shows where invasion was feared most in various colours from yellow to black. These maps were protected by curtains which the Prime Minister would pull when he had to see people not authorised to know such information.

Above: The Cabinet conference room today. Winston Churchill sat in the larger chair in the centre of the left-hand table. (IWM).

Below: The underground corridor inside the entrance as it is today. (IWM).

AFTER THE BATTLE

IT HAPPENED HERE

Oradour sur Glane

Saturday, 10th June, 1944

Before D-Day the French Maquis had made many attacks, blowing up roads and railways and generally disrupting communications. These attacks were stepped up in the hours preceding D-Day which was notified to the waiting Maquis by the BBC, the code phrase being two lines from a poem by Verlaine.

After D-Day various reinforcements were rushed by von Runstedt, the German commander, to plug his defences. The II SS Panzer Division 'Das Reich' reached the Limoges area of France on 6th June.

Fourteen miles north west of Limoges lies Oradour sur Glane. Saturday 10th June was a busy day in the village. Apart from the village population being increased by an influx of refugees, being Saturday, many visitors had come from Limoges and surrounding villages. The village was a typical French village of grey stone houses and narrow streets.

At 2.15 p.m. a large convoy of Waffen SS troops, wearing camouflaged green and yellow denims, drove into the village and parked in two places. The German commander was Heinz Lammerding.

Shortly afterwards the town crier announced that the entire population must assemble with identity cards in the village square. A house-to-house search was carried out to ensure everybody was there including rounding up workers in the fields. The 191 schoolchildren were told to go to the church together with all the women and younger children, a group totalling 400. One small boy, Roger Godfrin, aged 8, managed to slip away to the surrounding woods.

The German Commander then announced that they were searching for Maquis arms and accordingly the men were split into six groups and taken to separate barns. Each group was guarded by several soldiers armed with submachine guns. Five minutes after they were there a shot was fired in the main square as a signal for the soldiers, who opened fire on the helpless prisoners. After the firing died away the soldiers picked their way between the bodies finishing off with their automatics those who still showed signs of life. The troops then covered the bodies with wood and straw and then set fire to the buildings. Only a handful of the villagers who were hidden by the bodies of their dead compatriots were able to escape.

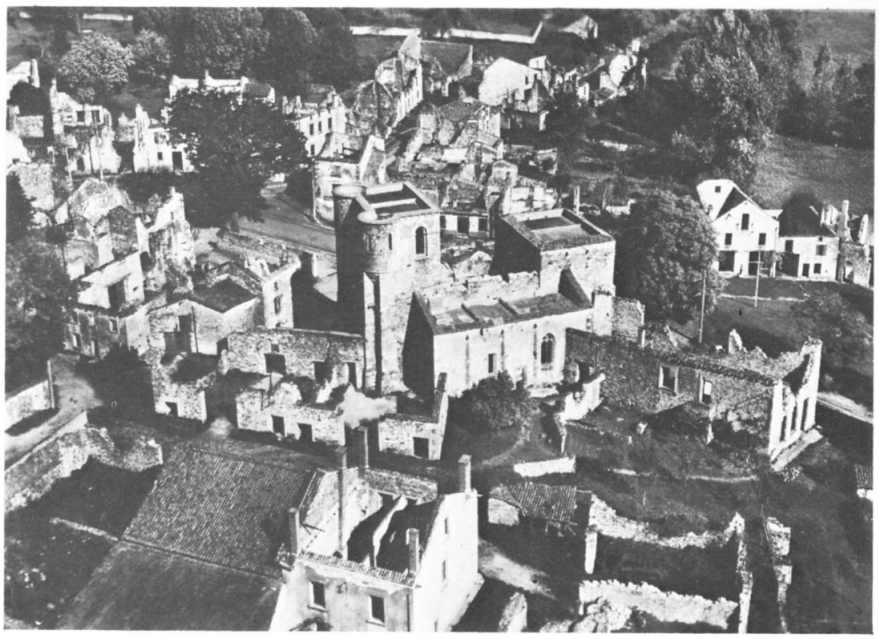
At 4 p.m. soldiers entered the church where the women and children had been taken, carrying a packing case with fuses attached. These were then lit and the soldiers retired. The case exploded and produced a dense suffocating smoke. Those women that tried to escape the smoke through the chapel door to the churchyard were shot. One woman, Madame Rouffanche, managed to hide behind the altar (*see photograph*). Here she found a step ladder and managed to climb up and squeeze through the broken middle window. A woman and child who tried to follow her were machine-gunned.

After destroying and setting fire to the other houses in the village the Germans left.

Later the Germans issued a statement to the effect that in the course of military operations Oradour sur Glane had been destroyed.

The village has been preserved as a memorial to the hundreds that died there. A new Oradour sur Glane has been rebuilt down the road. Signboards mark the location of the six buildings where the men were executed. The church still stands. The window through which Madame Rouffanche escaped is 10ft. from the ground.

The streets are silent, the tram tracks overgrown, the local garage still full of burnt out cars.



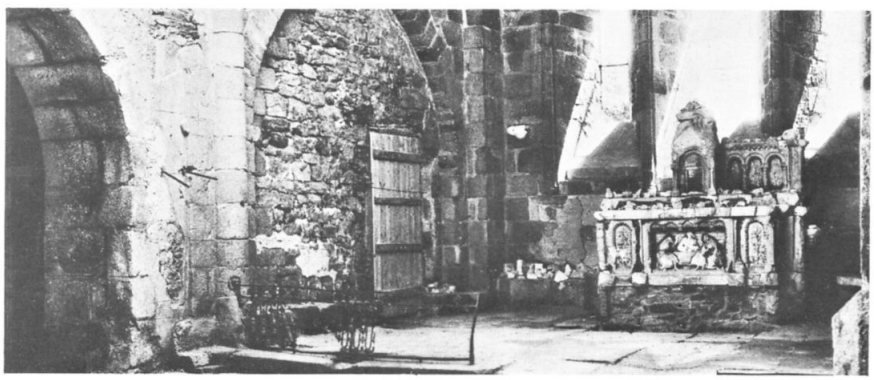
The village of Oradour sur Glane today.

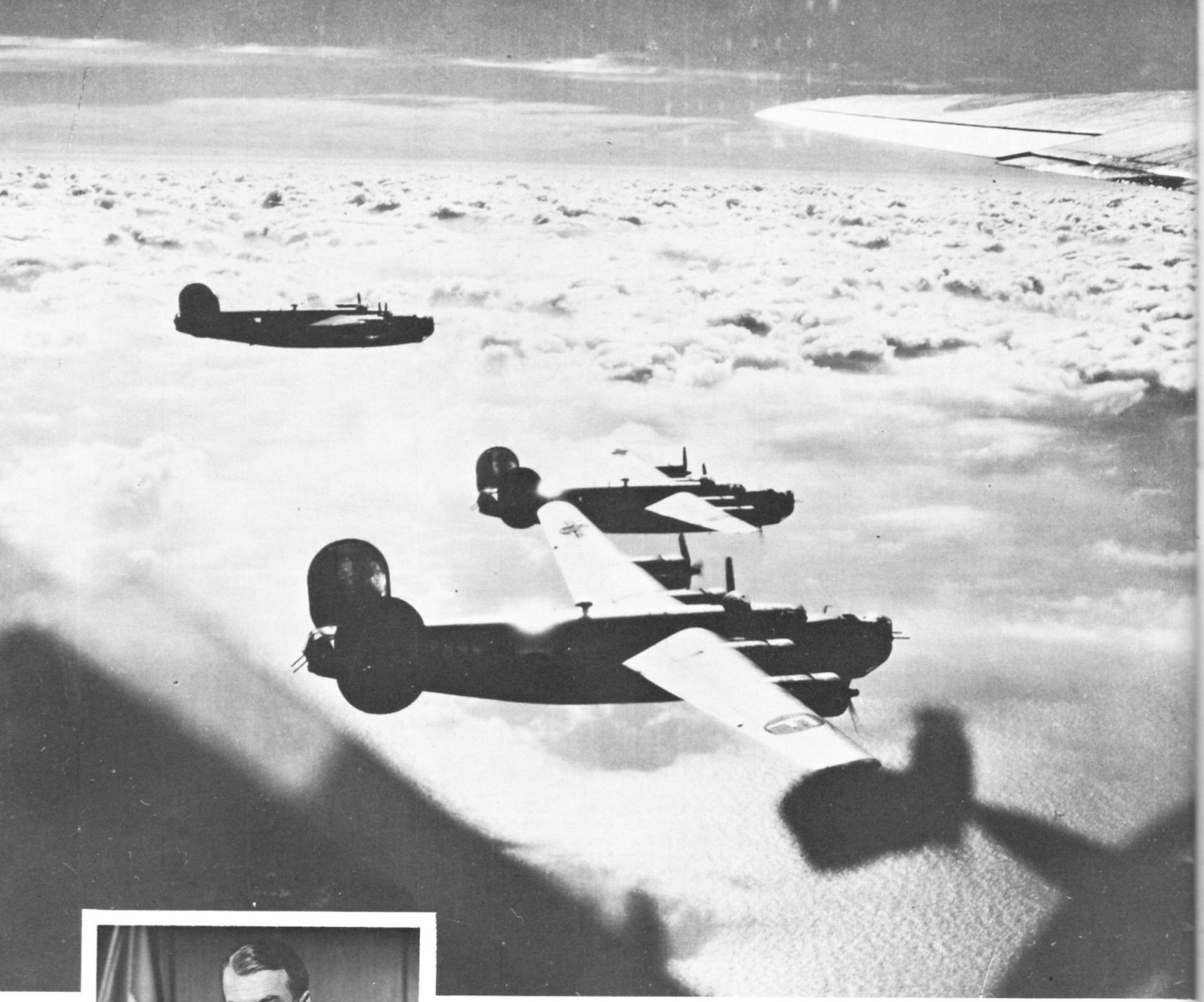
Above: The garage full of burnt out cars.

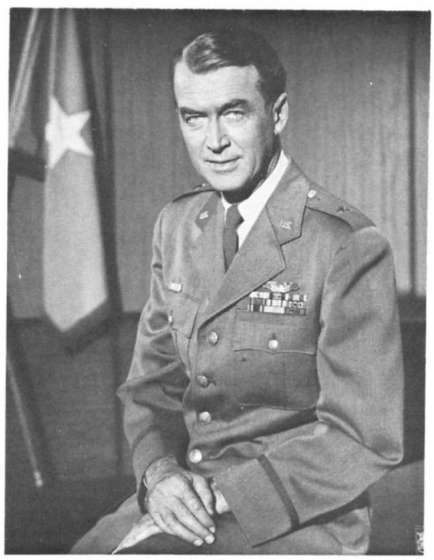
Above: One of the buildings in which a group of the villagers were shot.

Below: Inside the church where 400 women and children were massacred.

Madame Rouffanche escaped through the centre window of the church. The wire mesh is still buckled.







AFTER THE BATTLE

PERSONALITY

James Stewart LIBERATOR PILOT

By H. HOLMES adapted by J. C. SCUTTS

January 7, 1944. With the invasion of Europe but five months away, the Allied air forces continue their assault on Hitler's Fortress Europe; by day the US Army 8th Air Force sends ever larger formations of Fortresses and Liberators to targets in France and Germany. On that January day, 500 B-17s and B-24s had assembled over East Anglia for a raid to Ludwigshafen and were heading for Frankfurt, where a sudden turn would be made for a run into the primary target. Leading 48 Liberators of the 445th Bomb Group in that formation was Captain James Maitland Stewart, the actor who had suspended his screen career for the duration of the war.

With an Academy Award for his part in *The Philadelphia Story*, James Stewart did not find it easy to follow a military career in the America of the 1940s. He enlisted in the US Army Air Corps and reported for duty at Moffett Field, California, on March 21st, 1941. His Hollywood friends and colleagues, however, could not at first accept that Stewart was really serious, thinking that he would settle for easy postings after having made the gesture of signing on. The man with the characteristic drawl had other ideas; he already had 200 hours of civilian flying and a commercial pilot's licence when he joined up and first and foremost, he wanted to fly.

Publicity hungry generals saw in Stewart a golden opportunity to boost recruiting and many made it their business to be photographed with him. Stewart tolerated it only as far as he had to, all the while stressing that he was there primarily to do the job he had signed on to do — fly and fight for his country.

Persistance finally paid off when the CO at Moffett Field realised what the star wanted. So keen was Stewart to build up more flying experience that he chose to give up his weekend passes and pay for lessons out of his own pocket. In this way, he piled up another 100 hours, but the military machine decided that Stewart would have to work even harder for a flying commission than a new recruit starting from scratch.

Eventually, Stewart went before the

proficiency board, took a flight test and passed. His commission came through after some delay in late January 1942, but another request for combat duty was denied; the Air Force wanted a safe backwater for its valuable property. The place chosen was Kirtland Field, New Mexico, for six months' Bombardier Training School.

Stewart had filed a number of transfer requests and he was eventually moved to Hobbs Field, also in New Mexico, to take a heavy bomber conversion course. Combat duty seemed a little closer when he had checked out as aircraft commander, but it was not to be. Transferred to 2nd AF HQ at Salt Lake City, Stewart was assigned as 'static personnel', which meant an instructor's job on B-17s.

The boring routine of teaching the finer points of the Fortress continued until 1943 when an incident occurred which called on Stewart's experience and skill. During a night flight, a green young navigator took over the pilot's seat when Stewart vacated the position to check equipment in the nose of the aircraft. After a few minutes, the bomber's Number One engine exploded and sent pieces of cowling tearing into the fuselage. One chunk hit the trainee pilot, knocking him out and the young navigator, instead of trying to find the fire extinguisher selector switch, froze at the controls and sat there, helpless. Stewart rushed to the flight deck and ordered the boy to move out, but fear had such a grip on the navigator that the movie star had to lift him bodily from the seat. With the switch thrown, the fire gradually died out and Stewart brought the bomber home for an uneventful landing on three engines.

At that time, the 445th Bomb Group Sioux City needed an operations officer for its 703rd Squadron and Stewart was delighted to be assigned the job, particularly in view of the fact that the group was due to go overseas at any time. James Stewart had made it. After three weeks, he was made squadron commander of the 703rd. Before the unit left for England, however, Stewart recalled an incident while flying a Liberator over Iowa:

"I was making a landing in a thunderstorm and between lots of lightning and some bad judgement on my part, I flew the poor bird into the ground at 120 mph. The nosewheel gave way and was never found again, but other than that, she just bounced and settled down with a groan."

The 445th was based in England at Tibenham, Norfolk, its four component squadrons being the 700th, 701st, 702nd and 703rd, flying B-24H, J, L and M model Liberators.

The January 7 mission was challenged by the Luftwaffe over Belgium and after the fighters came the flak. On the target run-in, each group separated for its own attack and Stewart alerted his bombardier. As the bomb doors opened, a shell burst right under the Liberator's port wing, sending the aircraft reeling to starboard. Stewart righted the bomber and completed the target run, but as the group turned for home, the navigator called in the position of the lead group in the formation, the 389th from Hethel. Stewart saw that it was on a due west heading which would take it over northern France and the fighter bases in that area.

Captain Stewart had to decide whether to stay with the main formation or join the 389th, where the firepower of his group would soon be sorely needed; it would be his decision and nobody would have blamed him for staying where he was, but Stewart plumped to help the straying bunch of Liberators.

Ordering his formation to tighten up, Stewart moved into position behind the Hethel-based bombers and tried calling the major leading them, but without avail. The two groups were 30 miles south west of Paris when the fighters started their attacks. Cannon shells tore into the massed Liberators and the 389th's lead ship was the first to go down. In flames, it exploded and broke in two. Seven other 389th B-24s went down before the formation crossed the French coast, but when Stewart brought his bombers into Tibenham not a single 455th ship had been lost. Later, he was credited with having prevented the virtual destruction of the 389th by his selfless supporting action.

The old controversy over which was the best US bomber still rages among ex-B-17 and B-24 crews and James Stewart has given this objective view of the Liberator:

"I remember the B-24 very well and, although it came out of the war with a rather questionable reputation for some reason, I think most of those who flew the airplane have a very soft spot in their hearts for the machine."

"In combat, the airplane was no match for the B-17 as a formation bomber above 25,000 feet, but from 12,000 to 18,000, it did a fine job."

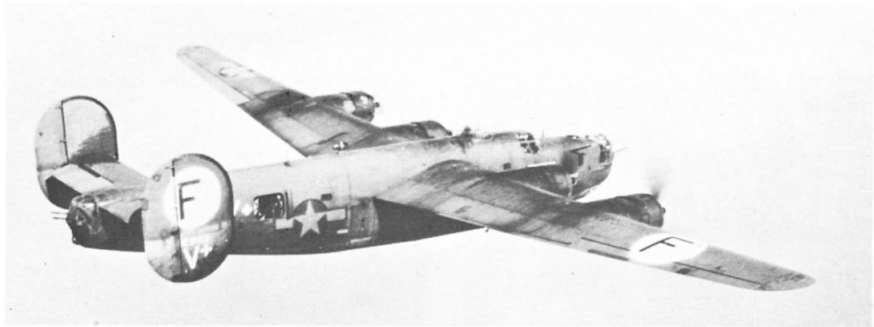
General James Stewart flew 20 combat missions with the 8th AF in England, won a DFC and added an oak leaf cluster to it; as well as other US medals, he was also given the French *Croix de Guerre*. That he led the 445th BG with success is reflected in the fact that whenever he did so, no man or aircraft was lost, proving that his example was, as the records state, 'superior'.

Early in 1944, Stewart transferred to the 453rd BG as group operations officer and returned to the US in 1945 as a full colonel. It is perhaps ironic that in his subsequent screen career, which included such films as *The Spirit of St Louis* and *The Flight of the Phoenix*, James Stewart was allowed to do little or no actual flying—studio insurance rates would not stand the risk!

Above: Colonel James Stewart receives the Croix de Guerre with palm from Lieutenant General Martial Valin, Chief of Staff, French Air Force, for 'exceptional services'. (USAF).

Below: A B-24 of the 445th Bomb Group. (USAF).

Bottom: James Stewart as Operations Officer interrogates members of his group after a mission. (USAF).



AFTER THE BATTLE

PRESERVATION

The Joe Lindhurst collection

Top: Joe Lindhurst's 'Army' somewhere in 'Southern England' 1973. (M. Emery). Above: Joe Lindhurst (second from left) discussing the finer points of a jeep engine with members of his group.

Not far from Chichester in Sussex lies the temporary home of a military vehicle collection started ten years ago by former holiday camp owner Joe Lindhurst.

It was in 1942 that Lindhurst first set his heart on having his own military vehicle when he saw a Canadian Army jeep driven by a young volunteer soldier. Although it took twenty years he never lost sight of his ambition which has now grown to a collection of over twenty vehicles.

He started the collection in the early sixties with a jeep from a film company which he used like a second car. In those days such a thing was a novelty and during the winter he decided to restore it to its original combat condition.

The search for original spares and fittings led him far and wide. Subsequently, in May 1968, the vehicle was entered with two others in the commercial section of the London to Brighton run. It proved to be Joe's crowning achievement, being awarded 1st, 2nd and 3rd prizes. When Lord Montague presented the prizes he invited Joe Lindhurst to form a guard of honour for General Montgomery's Humber Staff Car 'Old Faithful' at Beaulieu when it joined the museum.

Interest mounted, and other enthusiasts in the area joined with Joe Lindhurst in restoring other vehicles to build up a comprehensive 'Army'.

Evenings and weekends usually find up to ten helpers restoring, welding and painting, and now Joe fields more than twelve vehicles at once at rallies and shows.

His team all have uniforms of the US 5th Army, and when his 'army' is on the road in convoy, together with MPs on Harley-Davidson motor-cycles, many heads turn and memories of thirty years ago revived.

1.

2.

1 & 2. Before and after restoration of a Dodge 4x4 weapons carrier.

3. A jeep realistically restored and converted into an SAS desert patrol vehicle.

4. The 'Army' on the road. (M. Emery).

5. A realistic attack re-enacted in the Sussex countryside. (M. Emery).

6. A Stuart tank being restored nears completion.

3.

4. Above 5. Below

6. Above

AFTER THE BATTLE

WAR FILMS IN THE MAKING

Battle of Britain

North Weald, with the modern control tower in the background covered with camouflage netting, was the setting for some of the major action.

Above London's Hyde Park the Spitfire . . . floated. Its height erased any suggestion of speed so that, although it must have been flying fast, the classic Spitfire shape only seemed to be drifting up there in the sky.

And that was what started it. That was what ignited the whole concept, flared a three-year long enthusiasm, which film producers Harry Saltzman and S. Benjamin Fisz hoped would result in a film that could be flourished with some honesty and no small pride within the shadow of the original occasion: the Battle of Britian.

The Spitfire was rehearsing for the Queen's fly-past and with the sound of its familiar Rolls-Merlin roar came the idea to make a film about a time when Spitfires and Hurricanes and the pilots who flew them were the only barricade that stood between Britain and Nazi tyranny.

Because of the producers' need to make their entertainment authentic they called in the Ministry of Defence and Royal Air Force, who were tremendously co-operative. They approached former executives within the German Luftwaffe and the German Fighter Pilots' Association — and were accorded a similar co-operation.

The film, which took three years' preparation work to become a multi-million dollar reality, is based on historical facts and the book 'The Narrow Margin'' by Derek Wood and Derek Dempster, which was six years being researched.

Director Guy Hamilton first shouted ''Action'' in Spain on March 10th, 1968, where filming began of the fall of Dunkirk and the massive formation flying of the many German planes which were assembled there. These along with the British Spitfires and Hurricanes made Harry Saltzman the world's 35th largest air power.

In all more than 6,000 sketches were assembled for the story-board sequence of events which helped director Guy Hamilton to provide the tension he wanted for the separate air battles.

After the five units left Spain, where the main portion of the German sequences were staged, the problem that faced the film-makers was to match the obvious authenticity of what had been gained in Spain with British sequences that would be equally valid.

Wing Commander George Elliot, attached to the film company by the R.A.F., recruited ten specially-selected R.A.F. pilots to train so that they could handle, in these jet-ridden days, the intricacies of the propellor-driven Spitfires and Hurricanes. Against them was pitted a team from Spain, led by Commandante Don Pedro Santa Cruz and including American flyers from the Confederate Air Force, a Texas Flying Museum, in the Messerschmitt 109s that had been assembled for the film.

The arrival of these Messerschmitts along the notorious route that cuts into England over the white cliffs of Dover made a remarkable sight and there was an eerie sense of the past being relived for those who saw them.

The stars of the film relax off set. Left to right are Edward Fox, Christopher Plummer, Robert Shaw and Ian McShane.

With the co-operation of the Ministry of Defence and the Royal Air Force the airfields of Duxford, North Weald, Debden, Northolt, and Hawkinge once more heard in the sky above, the engine-whine and machine-gun-stutter of planes in combat.

The abandoned Duxford airfield had to have areas re-built at a cost of £38,000, and guard dogs had to be called in to protect the planes. Protection was needed because at weekends hundreds of sightseers trampled nearby cornfields to get a look at the planes.

Tactical advisers on "The Battle of Britain" were Wing Commander Bob Stanford Tuck, one of Britain's foremost fighter aces, and General Adolf Galland, former head of the German Luftwaffe . . . the best of friends who used to be the best of enemies.

THE AIRCRAFT

Group Captain Hamish Mahaddie, D.S.O., D.F.C., A.F.C. (and bar), Czech M.C., C. Eng., A.F.R.Ae.S., R.A.F. (Retd.), was Chief Technical Adviser on "The Battle of Britain", and spent three years touring many countries on the film's behalf.

He assembled from whichever country they were found, the Spitfires, Hurricanes, Messerschmitts and Heinkels, to take part in the ferocious dogfights for the film.

Mahaddie believes he must have spent more than a hundred thousand pounds on aircraft and aircraft parts.

THE REPLICAS

Once again Spitfires and Hurricanes littered the airfields. Not until one actually touched some of them did one realise that camouflaged fibre-glass had replaced the frail covering skin of 1940.

It is honest praise for the backroom boys working on "The Battle of Britain", for, building the mock-up planes was just a small part of the work that went on at Pinewood Studios.

More than 100 authentic flying planes of the period, Spitfires, Hurricanes, Heinkels, Messerschmitts and Stukas were gathered from all parts of the globe during a three year period. Despite every effort the total was still not sufficent to allow director Guy Hamilton to re-stage "Battle of Britain" as he wanted for his Panavision cameras.

Below: Christopher Plummer and Susannah York during a break in the shooting.
Right: The tented workshop at Pinewood where the fibreglass replicas were built.

Three tents, 120 feet x 80 feet, housed Pinewood's aircraft factory. Mass produced planes tumbled off the assembly line as urgently as they did in war-time.

It was there — and in other workshops like the paint shop and the metal shop — that work steadily increased re-creating the aircraft used as static 'dressing' on the actual Battle of Britain airfields at Duxford, North Weald, Hawkinge and Northolt, or used in the explosive action sequences when they were blown up by straffing Messerschmitts.

Perhaps the proudest achievments of construction manager Ken Softly and his men of Pinewood was the building of a Heinkel III. It weighed six tons and was complete down to the most minute detail.

The metal shop not only concerned itself with big items like propellors and undercarriages but also such delicate objects as gunsights and cannons and bombs.

Once assembled the planes were dismantled before they were moved to the various airfields on special trailers constructed for this purpose.

THE FILMING

The first problem was to recreate flying sequences in colour, the action equivalent of the duels that took place during the Battle of Britain and to make them the most exciting and realistic ever filmed.

A B25 Mitchell bomber of the type which operated in the European theatre during World War II was used by the aerial filming unit to record the reconstruction of those deadly jousts that involved Hurricanes, Spitfires, Messerschmitts and Heinkels.

Air to air and ground to air — the effect

Producer Harry Saltzman stands in front of the CASA 2. 111-Ds of the Spanish Air Force, which were originally Spanish built Heinkel He 111s, on Tablada airfield, Spain.

aimed for was authenticity of tension. To achieve that, the aircraft was modified by Robert E. Weimer, of Flying 'W' Products and Frank A. Hill of the Hill Air Company, both of Florida, U.S.A. For the technically-minded:

1. A hemispherical optical Plexiglass unit replaced the normal nose, so that the camera could cover 210 degrees through all elevations — without distortion.
2. In the tail the gun turret was replaced by a clear vision camera position.
3. Clear vision panels were fitted at the waist gun positions port and starboard.
4. In the bomb bay there was a retracting double-joined arm with a remote-control camera at the end — this covered 360 degrees.
5. The mid-upper turret was replaced by an astrodome from where the aerial director controlled all filming. He kept in touch with all aircraft and cameras through radio and closed circuit T.V.

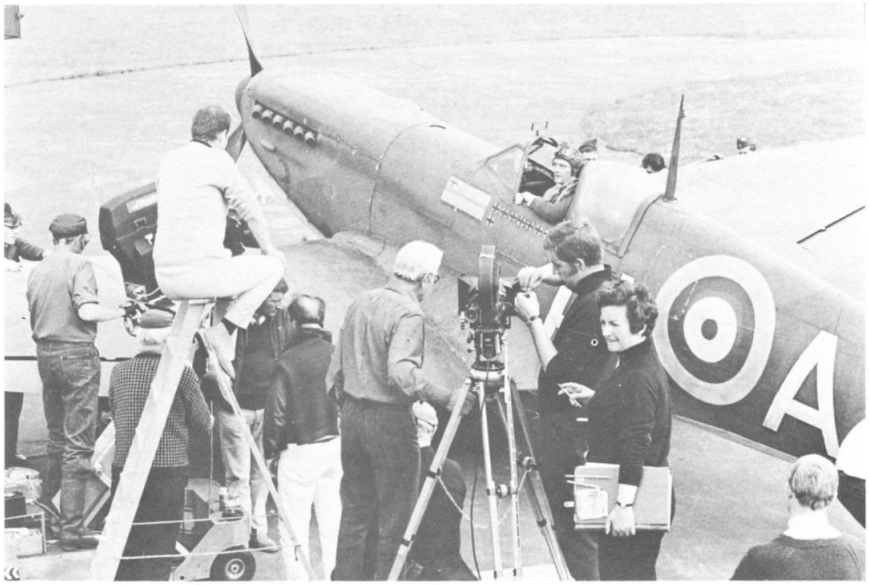
Pilot and owner of the plane is British-born ex-R.A.F. pilot John R. Hawke, President of Euramericair, Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

It took him 22 flying hours to bring the B25 to Britain.

THE FLYING

Wing Commander George Elliott, O.B.E., D.F.C., helped create the spectacular flying scenes for the film. He trained and supervised R.A.F. pilots to fly Spitfires and Hurricanes of 1940.

Wing Commander Elliott.



The camera crew prepare to shoot a scene featuring Robert Shaw at North Weald.

Every Spitfire and Hurricane that could fly had been gathered from all over the world at Duxford, North Weald, Hawkinge and Debden airfields. But there was nobody to fly them.

Jet-trained pilots couldn't fly the famous propeller-powered fighter planes. They had to be re-educated.

There were 800 applications from R.A.F. instructors and fighter pilots and Elliott had to choose ten.

'I devised a way of testing my short list,' he says. 'I asked each of them to fly in a dual control Spitfire with me. If they couldn't grasp it immediately I knew they would be a danger to their fellow pilots.' Elliott got his ten men.

Wing Commander Elliott headed the air formations himself and led his team in the dogfights that were fought out between Spitfires and Hurricanes and the German Messerschmitts and Heinkels.

The German planes were flown by pilots of the Spanish Air Force.

A lot of the pilots' time was taken up by long, intensive briefings to rehearse and plot the complex manoeuvres that go into filming air-to-air combat.

Wing Commander Elliott's main worry on "The Battle of Britain" was that there were only 50 hours of flying time left for each British plane before they had to be reserviced.

AERIAL LOCATIONS . . .

For the first time a piece of official air-space was awarded to a film — "The Battle of Britain".

The skies above any country have lanes and junctions and byeways that, in this jet-age, are just as busy — and twice as dangerous — as any stretch of road.

So the air-space, which was over Norfolk and Suffolk, had to be carefully allotted to the aerial unit by the Military Air Traffic Organisation.

The whole business of the avoidance of other aircraft was organised by the Ministry of Defence's man-on-the-spot Wing Commander Leslie Young.

The logistics of using the air are complex, but almost any air-space 'within reason' can be used below 2,000 feet. However better results are obtained for filming by climbing through cloud to 4,000 feet . . . It's at these heights, though, where you're likely to encounter the arrival of a Boeing 707 from New York that's on its way down — unless your space has been cleared.

That's why a 'Notice to Airmen' was issued warning them to avoid the air-space that had been allotted to the filming of "The Battle of Britain".

"My rather pessimistic views at the beginning of this exercise were not justified," says Wing Commander Leslie Young.

"Being the person responsible for the movements of the aircraft I was naturally very grateful that nobody transgressed. This was largely thanks to the controller at Duxford, Squadron Leader Ron Chadwick."

The space allotted to the production covered three areas of the East Midlands and East Anglia, each of which was approximately 50 miles long by 10 miles wide.

"We only had two near misses," says Young. "Once when an R.A.F. Canberra came down through the cloud to find a Luftwaffe M.E. 109 underneath him and one other plane which nearly joined the formation by mistake! Afterwards the pilot said he didn't think there were any M.E. 109s left. He thought we'd shot them all down years ago!"

THE DAY A LEGEND WAS SOLD . . .

When filming was completed after seven months of aerial photography nearly thirty of the planes assembled by producer Saltzman and co-producer Fisz, were put up for sale.

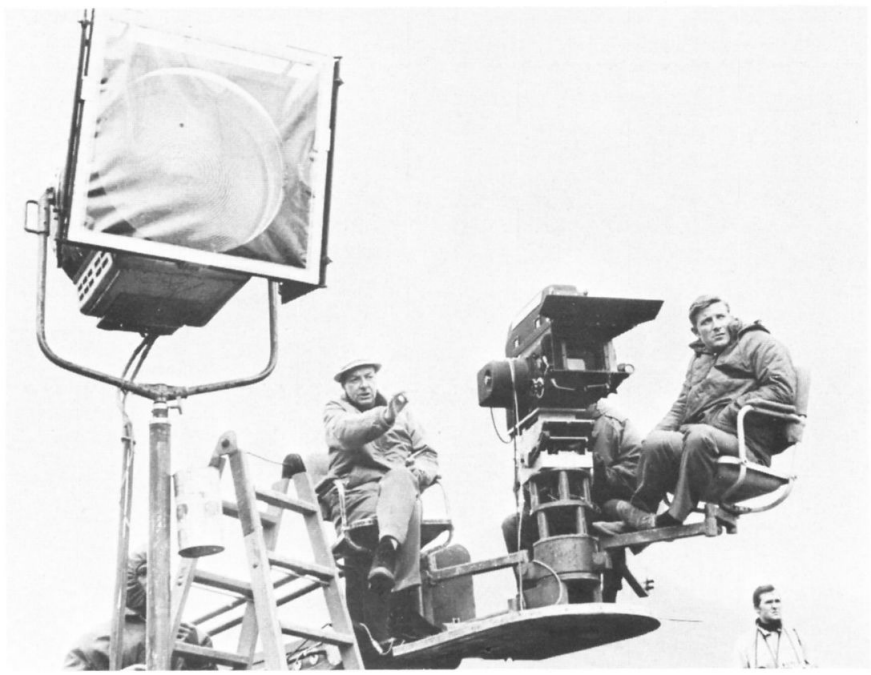
The Confederate Air Force — a living 'museum' at Harlingen in Texas devoted to the preservation of great fighting planes of World War II — has purchased several Messerschmitts and a Spitfire to add to their collection. These will be exhibited in America.

When he was putting up the planes for sale, Group Captain Hamish Mahaddie, Chief Technical Adviser on "The Battle of Britain", commented:

"After three years of hard labour getting the planes and working with them it's a great loss to see them go."

The planes included three Spitfires and one Hurricane from the R.A.F. Memorial Flight. Thirty-one Heinkel bombers, and a Junkers 52 utilised during the filming in Spain of the German side of "Battle of Britain", have been returned to the Spanish Air Force.

Guy Hamilton, the director, on location in Spain.



Above: Dragon Road in Bermondsey, due for slum clearance, was turned over to Spitfire Productions by the Greater London Council for the realistic blitz scenes.

Below: Aldwych Underground station was realistically sand-bagged and used in the air raid scenes.

All photographs Spitfire Productions Ltd.